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THE EAST WIND OF LOVE

I

BY COMPTON MACKENZIE

Novels and Romances

SINISTER STREET
SYLVIA SCARLETT
GUY AND PAULINE

CARNIVAL
FIGURE OF EIGHT
CORAL
THE VANITY GIRL
ROGUES AND VAGABONDS

THE ALTAR STEPS
THE PARSON'S PROGRESS
THE HEAVENLY LADDER

HUNTING THE FAIRIES
WHISKY GALORE
KEEP THE HOME GUARD TURNING
THE MONARCH OF THE GLEN

THE RED TAPEWORM
POOR RELATIONS
APRIL FOOLS
RICH RELATIVES
BUTTERCUPS AND DAISIES
WATER ON THE BRAIN

VESTAL FIRE
EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN

EXTREMES MEET
THE THREE COURIERS

OUR STREET
THE DARKENING GREEN

THE PASSIONATE ELOPEMENT
FAIRY GOLD
THE SEVEN AGES OF WOMAN
THE OLD MEN OF THE SEA

THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE: ·
THE EAST WIND Book One
THE EAST WIND Book Two
THE SOUTH WIND Book One
THE SOUTH WIND Book Two
THE WEST WIND Book One
THE WEST WIND Book Two
THE NORTH WIND Book One
THE NORTH WIND Book Two

History and Biography

GALLIPOLI MEMORIES
ATHENIAN MEMORIES
GREEK MEMORIES
AEGEAN MEMORIES
WIND OF FREEDOM
MR ROOSEVELT
DR BENES

PRINCE CHARLIE
PRINCE CHARLIE AND HIS LADIES
CATHOLICISM AND SCOTLAND
MARATHON AND SALAMIS
PERICLES
THE WINDSOR TAPESTRY
THE VITAL FLAME

Travel

ALL OVER THE PLACE

Essays and Criticism

A MUSICAL CHAIR
UNCONSIDERED TRIFLES
REAPED AND BOUND
LITERATURE IN MY TIME

Children's Stories

SANTA CLAUS IN SUMMER
TOLD
MABEL IN QUEER STREET
THE UNPLEASANT VISITORS
THE CONCEITED DOLL
THE ENCHANTED BLANKET
THE DINING-ROOM BATTLE
THE ADVENTURES OF TWO CHAIRS
THE ENCHANTED ISLAND
THE NAUGHTYMOBILE
THE FAIRY IN THE WINDOW BOX
THE STAIRS THAT KEPT ON GOING
DOWN

Play

THE LOST CAUSE

Verses

POEMS 1907
KENSINGTON RHYMES

THE EAST WIND OF LOVE

BEING VOLUME ONE OF 'THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE'

By

COMPTON MACKENZIE

BOOK ONE

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TO
ERIC LINKLATER

My dear Eric,

Just over three years ago I told you that my next novel would be called 'The Four Winds of Love', and I asked you to accept the dedication of it. At that time my notion was that it would be a long novel, but not too long to be published in a single volume. When I sat down to weave the various themes into a whole it was soon apparent that the book would be twice as long as I had supposed; but after working at it for some six months I was at last compelled to recognize that, if the task I had set myself was to be completed without shirking, the book would be four times the length anticipated while it was just floating about agreeably in my fancy. So you see, instead of offering you a complete edifice I offer you no more than the foundations of one.

When I was three-quarters of the way through 'Sinister Street' the European war began, and the large-scale book I had planned to build on the foundations of 'Sinister Street' had to be abandoned on account of the inadequacy of such foundations for an edifice which would have to house the war and its effect upon the life of our time. For two or three books I tried to persevere with my original design, but the inadequacy of the foundations became increasingly apparent, and I was driven to accept the hard fact that many years must pass before I could hope to achieve the emotional detachment and experienced craftsmanship required to build my ambitious edifice to a new design. There was a moment when I believed I had discovered a formula for a novel

The Four Winds of Love

about the war, but I threw that over in order to write the series which began with 'Gallipoli Memories', and came to an untoward conclusion with 'Greek Memories'. After the tiresome case brought about by the third volume, my publisher wrote to find out what the offended Authorities disliked, so that the necessary excisions might be made and the withdrawn volume reissued like a blank cartridge. The reply was that the offended Authorities could not assent to this because, inasmuch as a certain number of the copies were in circulation, a foreign agent would only have to compare one of these copies with the expurgated version to discover what it was the Authorities wished to hide from him! In other words 'Greek Memories' could never be published and therefore the Authorities could feel sure that the fourth volume 'Aegean Memories' would probably never even be written, and certainly never published in my lifetime. So I was left with another unfinished edifice, and I cannot help feeling that I am inviting fortune's mischief by setting out to build yet again a work in successive volumes. In view of what fortune may hold in store for this work, I hesitate to announce any more than that the next volume will be 'The South Wind of Love', and will take up the tale eleven years later and carry it on to the end of the war, that 'The West Wind of Love' will deal with the years immediately after the war, and that 'The North Wind of Love' will bring the action into the third decade of this century.

Five years of reviewing have left me with a prejudice against very long books, and I shall find it easy to sympathize with critics who groan at the prospect before them. I am hopeful that when the four volumes are published it will be clear that the size of the work was demanded by the design, but whether a design which involves such an accumulation of

The East Wind

incident, such an amount of discussion, such a variety of scene, and such a crowd of characters will be approved is another matter, and I confess that I await the final verdict with some anxiety.

In dedicating to you the first volume of 'The Four Winds of Love', I have chosen a junior contemporary for whose existing work I have a secure admiration and in whose future work I have an equally secure confidence, but let that pass; a truer and better reason is that I hope to please thereby a friend to whose friendship I owe more than can be paid with words.

Yours ever,

Compton Mackenzie

SUIDHEACHAN

ISLE OF BARRA

November, 1936

The East Wind of Love

AT TWENTY-THREE MINUTES TO FIVE ON A COLD FRIDAY Afternoon of encroaching fog in the month of March, 1900, Mr Askew, the Latin master of the Upper and Lower Sixth forms at St James's School, tugged at a grizzled red beard, twitched a rapid eyelid several times over each bright blue eye, swung a leonine head slowly from side to side as if it were weighing the pros and cons of a delicate decision, and at last, with a rusty sigh, announced that he supposed they must have some light on the situation.

"Will our Flamen oblige?" he enquired in that dry didactic voice of his, which might have been assumed long ago either to mask an unconquerable shyness or as the cloak of scholastic infallibility.

John Pendarves Ogilvie—'Judge' Ogilvie to his school-fellows—a slim youth of seventeen with wavy nutbrown hair and a fresh complexion, had just succeeded in escaping from the claims to his attention of some knotty problem in the rugged trunk of a Satire of Perseus by balancing his chair on two legs without either touching the desk with his hands or the classroom wall with his back, thus achieving a kind of ecstatic levitation. The scrape of the rusty voice brought his chair down to earth again, and he strolled across the floor past a table on which was built up a plaster model of ancient Rome, the pride and joy of Mr Askew, to find his torch in the large box of Bryant and May's matches on the master's desk.

"You've no matches of your own, Flamen?" Askew murmured, tufted eyebrows raised.

"No, sir," replied the boy, and, as he turned away from the master's dais for a chair on which to reach the tap of the multi-jetted iron gaselier, he winked at his sixteen classmates over a quick sidelong smile. They understood the joke, because the 'Judge' had already discussed before school the odds on and against his having been spotted by Askew when the latter had passed down the platform at High Street, Kensington, the night before just as his pupil was lighting up a cigarette in a third-class smoker of the Metropolitan Railway. So Askew *had* spotted him. While John Ogilvie sent the gaselier spinning round for the naked jets to flare one after another to his match he looked pensively down through the ring of light at his form-master's shock of hair. Was that remark about matches the prelude to a row, or would the man be content with letting him know that the cigarette had been spotted? Ogilvie jumped down from the chair and took the yellow box back to his form-master's desk.

"Thank you," said Askew, twitching every muscle in his face to carry off the implied rebuke without discovering his own embarrassment. "And may I express a hope, Ogilvie, that you will not be needing matches for some time either in school or . . ." he paused a second, and then barked sharply, "out of it?"

This was a double hit. The office of Flamen in the Classical Lower Sixth, which besides lighting the gas included various finicking classroom fatigue duties, was borne by the lowest boy in the form, a position John Ogilvie had now occupied since the preceding December examinations and one from which, according to both Askew the Latin master and Harvey the Greek

master of the Sixth, he was capable of escaping whenever he chose to exert himself, the next opportunity being at the end of this term. Not that 'Squeaky', the nickname of pale hook-nosed broad-shouldered Mr Harvey, kicked up such a fuss about his studies as Askew. Squeaky, who was the presiding spirit of the school magazine, recognized that Ogilvie's work on *The Jacobean* as an occasional contributor of light verse was genuinely arduous.

"And now, playmate of Thalia, will you cease to flirt with the Comic Muse and consider with more enthusiastic concentration the speech of Demosthenes which I am so unfortunate as to be compelled to inflict upon your attention?"

Thus Squeaky in his highest voice, eyes turned upward to the ceiling in a caricature of despair.

Askew, however, had lately shown signs of getting seriously restive. Still, it was decent of him to let that smoking incident pass with no more than a sarcastic allusion. Kirkham had recently spotted one of his History Sixth people smoking in the interval at some West-end theatre and had given him the *Bacchae* of Euripides to write out in Greek. A bit steep that, and a rotten pun. And Kirkham was supposed to be a sportsman. Ogilvie disentangled himself from meditation upon the games' master's lack of sportsmanship to find out what Askew was talking about now. Apparently the lighting of the gas and the imminence of the bell for prayers had postponed any further prodding into the darker corners of Perseus. He was already setting the home work for the week-end. Elegiacs, eh? Tennyson's *Maud*, by Jove! What a piece of luck! *Come into the garden, Maud?* Why,

The Four Winds of Love

old Cray had set that last year to the Upper Fifth, and he had a fair copy in one of his note-books. Ah, of course, that sausage-faced industrious German Schneberger *would* give it away. Wriggling about on his fat bottom with excited self-importance.

"Oh, did he?" Askew was muttering. "Ah, well, let me see. We'll have a try at an epigram in the style of Martial. Let me see . . . oh yes, here's one which ought to be good fun."

Good fun! But this epigram wasn't going to waste a couple of hours or more of Askew's Saturday or Sunday. Damn Schneberger. Earnest little ——

"Yes, this will do. Hurry up and take it down:

*"If all the good people were clever,
And all clever people were good,
The world would be nicer than ever
We thought that it possibly could.*

*But somehow, 'tis seldom or never
The two hit it off as they should;
The good are so harsh to the clever,
The clever so rude to the good!"*

Somebody would have to be hellish harsh to Schneberger, Ogilvie was reflecting when the bell at last went. But even as the members of the form were frantically packing their books away to get down to prayers and smell the air of freedom, which however cold it might be on this foggy March afternoon was sweet enough after the hot-water pipes of school, the voice of Schneberger was heard again:

"You didn't say what the essay was to be, sir."

No, and why not get out of the man's room before he remembered, you bum-faced little brute?

"Ah, no, wait a minute, nor I did. Hum . . . the essay . . . er—oh, well, compare the nineteenth-century romantic poets' treatment of love with the treatment of it by the Romans. Propertius and Catullus and all that. Ah, and by the way," Askew went on, "it's the Lent Term Debate to-night, isn't it? So we shall be meeting at tea."

The Lower Sixth crowded from the classroom, and Ogilvie ran the plump earnest Schneberger at such speed down the corridor that he could not stop himself from bumping into old Caryll, as the master of the Upper Fourth A was coming out of his classroom.

"You're in a very uncomfortable hurry for other people this afternoon, Schneberger," said old Caryll, with his quick little double cough.

"No, sir. I mean, yes, sir," muttered Schneberger, crimsoning.

"Expect that sort of thing from my boobies in the Upper Fourth A, but in the Sixth . . ."

Ogilvie with a grin on his face passed out of earshot of the lecture, and ran down the stone stairs to join the swirl of boys along the ground-floor corridor toward the Hall.

"Hullo, Fitz," he paused to ask of a fair lanky youth with pointed nose, pale blue eyes, and a wide mouth, who was standing aside from the crowd surging through the glass doors into the assemblage for Prayers. "Are you going to the Union Debate?"

"You bet hell I am," Fitzgerald replied. "I joined the silly show for this debate."

"What's the subject? I didn't look."

"That this House views with mistrust the granting of Home Rule to Ireland."

"Will you speak? If you do, I'll come."

"Wait you, and see whether I'll speak or not," said Fitzgerald as Ogilvie passed on into the Hall and left him as a Catholic to wait outside the swinging glass-panelled doors together with two or three of his co-religionists, some fifty Jews, and about half a dozen members of the more rigid Nonconformist sects while the Latin prayers were read by the Captain of the School to the six hundred odd members of the Anglican Communion mustered in the Hall.

So far as any religious atmosphere existed at the official Prayers, the Catholics and the Jews and the Plymouth Brethren might have joined their school-fellows without the slightest spiritual offence, since it would have been safe to wager that not one boy in the Hall could have said what the special prayers for the day were for, albeit by sheer repetition over hundreds of days, the Pater Noster and the concluding Gratia Domini were imprinted with meaningless verbal accuracy on their memories. The masters standing in the aisles looked on over their mortar-boards with countenances that aimed at expressing a courteous piety, a kind of *noblesse oblige* toward Almighty God; the boys stared blankly before them save where here and there an irrepressible youth convict-wise murmured through motionless lips a witticism or a criticism to his neighbour. Dr Brownjohn, the Headmaster, uttered his *Oremus* with the timbre of a double-bassoon. In his heavy silk gown, he was a figure of more potency to the assembled worshippers than the most tremendous gilded Buddha and appeared as huge as the hideous mosaic portrayals of the patron St James with his club and of the ecclesiastical

founder of the school in the days of the Renaissance, which gleamed dully in the gaslight on either side of that dingy apse filled up by the pipes of the new organ as a belly with guts. Combermere, the Captain of the School, a long tallowy youth wearing the dark-blue gown of the major scholarship he had won at Trinity College, Cambridge, began to gabble from the little black leather-bound volume of *Preces* the Pater Noster. A small boy sneezed from the ranks of the Classical Lower Second, and such was the relief of even a trifle like that during these last five minutes of the week's ennui that at least two hundred of his seniors turned round to see who had sneezed, to the painful confusion of the sneezer himself, the obscurest of many obscure tadpoles in the great pond of school. The boredom of the Jews and the Catholics and the Plymouth Brethren waiting without for the release of their Anglican fellows was lightened by no sneeze; but one of them, a Jewish boy in the Lower Sixth, found in the ache of jealousy distraction enough.

Stern was the nearest creature in St James's to a prodigy. He was not yet sixteen, and small for his age, so that he was still in jackets, which made his presence among the seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds of the Lower Sixth even more conspicuous. He was not yet developed enough physically to be called a handsome boy, though to proclaim him pretty were an insult to that finely carved pale face more Greek than Semitic, to those heavy-lidded large lustrous eyes and scarlet upcurving bow of a mouth. His skin seemed nearly translucent like fragile porcelain, his hands white and light and trim as feathers. An Eton jacket and frieze trousers

do not usually favour the figure of a fifteen-year-old boy, but Stern carried them off as a Florentine page in a *cinquecento* painting carries off doublet and long hose. A Gentile half as attractive as Stern would have won the glances of every ambitious young amorist in the school; but being a Jew he was disregarded. As for his cleverness, there were clever and industrious Jews at the top of every form on the classical side of St James's, and Stern's ability to write Greek Iambics which sent Squeaky's admiring voice near as high as a bat's and Latin lyrics which took the rust ever out of Askew's voice, was attributed by his classmates to the capacity for unlimited swotting that every Jew possessed and not at all to the inspiration of poetic genius.

For the greater part of his time at school Stern had been a solitary boy without ever being in the least lonely, thanks to a sympathetic homelife and a profound awareness of contemporary existence, the manifestations of which at St James's were insufficiently remarkable to arouse his interest. It was not until his form-leaping career brought him up to the Lower Sixth at the very least a year before he might have been expected to arrive there that he believed he had discovered in John Ogilvie, who was over eighteen months older than himself, a possible friend. The companionship had begun outside school on a December evening at the end of the previous year, when Ogilvie's bicycle being under repair he had had to make use of train and bus to reach his home in Hampstead and had been ready to welcome any company to while away the tedium of that roundabout journey in the last year of the nineteenth century. Ogilvie had been

agreeably surprised by Stern's powers of entertainment and had suggested that the younger boy should take to a bicycle and ride with him to and from school every day. Stern, in spite of the chance for reading the train and bus route gave him and in spite of the nervousness he felt in bicycling through the London traffic, had not hesitated to accept Ogilvie's proposal.

The companionship on which the older boy had embarked as a convenience soon affected him more intimately. John Ogilvie had as much temperament as Emil Stern; but nothing is so deadening to the display of temperament as popularity, and the 'Judge' had been popular all his schooldays. Not that he had courted popularity. He had the stock-in-trade of gifts which carry a schoolboy comfortably along through youth—the waggishness that concentrated itself upon authority instead of upon his schoolfellows, enough athletic skill to earn respect but not enough to involve him in rivalry, vitality without side, and a preference for firing bullets himself rather than casting them for other people to fire. Added to these was a love of his fellows which his fellows divined but would not for the world have embarrassed him or themselves by putting into words. It did not take Stern long to discover that the 'Judge' in spite of his popularity was fundamentally bored by the monotony of life at school, and that with less of that self-control which is the English public-school boy's substitute for good manners he might easily have fallen into a condition of nervous exasperation with what was seeming to him the infinite boredom of his own probable existence in the future.

"I wonder if I could get into the Imperial Yeomanry,"

Ogilvie had speculated one afternoon at the end of that black January of 1900. He and Stern had just bicycled past a couple of figures in khaki on the pavement lighted up by the flaring line of naked gas-jets along the front of a public-house and surrounded by a crowd of stay-at-home patriots eager to stand them more drinks.

"What for?" the younger boy had asked contemptuously. "To smack a cane against your breeches and clank your spurs for *that* mob?"

"No, but to get away from this frightful boredom of school. You only came to the beastly place two years ago, and you'd been travelling all over Europe before that. From the time I went to Randell's in the autumn of 1891 till now is nearly nine years. Good Lord!" Ogilvie had exclaimed as he started to pedal up the slope of Fitzjohn's Avenue in an attempt to work off his resentment, "I've been at this penal servitude for eight and a half years. No wonder criminals are comparatively rare from the public schools. We learn what prison is like in time to avoid it."

Stern had found it such hard work to keep up with his new friend's exasperated pedalling that there had not been breath to discuss properly the servitude of Randell's the Preparatory School or of St James's, and it had been the desire not to lose what might be the first approach to intimacy which had overcome sufficiently his dread of being snubbed and tempted him to invite Ogilvie into his house when they reached the corner of the road where he lived. The younger boy had afterwards regretted having added to the invitation as an excuse for it that there would be honey from Hymettus for tea, a drum of it having been sent to his mother from some friends in Athens. That

night in bed, looking back to this first visit of Ogilvie to his home, he had discovered in the honey a sudden racial impulse to bribe the Gentile's favour with something material. The fancy that Ogilvie would have suspected the motive for that offering of the honey and despised him for it had seemed likely to spoil the memory of those first magical hours of burgeoning friendship; and when he had waited for Ogilvie at the corner of the road next morning at half-past eight he had half expected to see him go coasting past down Fitzjohn's Avenue without a glance for the Jew who had bribed him with honey to bestow his patronage. He need not have fretted. Ogilvie had jumped off his Rover and murmured, with that side-long smile the younger boy always compared to Leonardo's John the Baptist, 'I say, Stern, it wasn't till I got home to Church Row and found my pater in a purple wax because I was half an hour late for dinner that I realized what a frightful long time I'd stayed at your house. Your mater must have thought me a most unspeakable clod.'

The younger boy was imagining that Fitzjohn's Avenue in the bitter grey of the January morning might be a golden strand lapped by the warm Mediterranean.

"No, she didn't at all. As a matter of fact," he assured his friend with a deep blush, "she said you were a very fascinating boy."

Ogilvie had mounted his Rover again without commenting on this, and they had passed Swiss Cottage before he had turned his head and said quickly, in spite of an obvious embarrassment, "Well, I think your mater is awfully fascinating, Stern."

Yet Stern had not apprehended what an effect that

visit had had upon Ogilvie. To him his mother, wonderful though she might be for her courage and ability, dear for her sympathy and devotion, was in the natural order of things. To him even his brother Julius, who had been the violin prodigy of the time, and who for two years now had been forbidden by the doctors to appear on a concert-platform, was in the natural order of things. To him that life of wandering from city to city over Europe and America had been a delightful experience, but an experience he could not imagine himself without; and his own ambition was too keen to let him waste a moment of regret upon the circumstances which had brought it to an end. He despised St James's, but he was glad of the chance to concentrate upon his own education, and he enjoyed the ease with which he escaped intellectually from the common herd. It gave him the assurance of that success which Jews by centuries of persecution have been driven to esteem so highly. Even his friendship with Ogilvie, inspired though it was by romantic emotion, was nevertheless coloured by the consciousness that Ogilvie was a popular figure at St James's. That such a one should bicycle to and from school every day with a boy eighteen months younger than himself, and that boy a Jew, was a foretaste of the worldly triumph he at once despised and desired.

Ogilvie, the moment he crossed the threshold of the Sterns' house, forgot his preoccupation with the monotony of the present and the humdrum of the future. Had he been granted that absolute assurance of immortality which accompanies the mental shock known as conversion, his imagination would hardly have been more profoundly stirred than it was by that household. He had lost his

own mother when he was just eight, and the comfortable or uncomfortable but always prosaic creatures that his schoolfellows' mothers seemed had gradually interposed between him and the memory of his own mother such a substantial barrier of dull everyday femininity that he had come to believe the picture in his mind of his own mother was but a childish dream to which time had added the bright hues that gave it a similitude of actual life. Mrs Stern's slim ivory beauty at thirty-six recalled the very appearance in his mind of his own mother, who would have been just her age to-day; but the superficial resemblance, which after all might be no more than fancy, was not what impressed John Ogilvie. It was the recognition round Mrs Stern of that nimbus of comprehending motherhood he had missed all these years, that angelic radiance from which little children receive their first intimations of the divine. For a moment as Ogilvie came slowly into the drawing-room, aware that it was full of beautiful pictures and china, that the curtains were of sea-green velvet and the patternless wall was an untinted grey, a rare sort of drawing-room for a Jacobean to enter in those days, his memory went fighting back to the dappled grass of a west-country orchard and the sound of his mother's voice reading to him *The Idylls of the King*, back to Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat. Swiftly darkened again that golden flash from the May of 1889 which now in 1900 seemed a hundred years ago, but it lasted long enough to kill his shyness and kept him in his friend's house until past eight o'clock.

In the succeeding weeks John Ogilvie had spent more and more of his time with Stern until one morning when the younger boy fell into step as usual beside him for their promenade across the playing-fields during the 'quarter' that divided morning school into two 'hours'. That morning Ogilvie had excused himself on the plea of wanting to see some chap about something. Presently Stern had beheld him arm-in-arm with Fitzgerald who was not a member of the Lower Sixth, not even a member of the Classical side, but a barbarian in Modern Sixth B. When that afternoon Ogilvie had discovered a puncture in his tyre which necessitated his going home by train and bus, and when during the next few days his deliberate avoidance of Stern's company became undeniable the younger boy was not long in deciding that Ogilvie's sensitiveness to unpopularity had become too strong for him. Evidently his friendship for a Jew had involved him in social discredit, and no doubt that gawky Irish lout had been the voice of public opinion.

It was true that Ogilvie's close association with a Jew had been regarded with surprise, but he might have survived that if he had not been chaffed for actually falling in love with young Stern. Even a boy who did enjoy popularity might have flinched from the laughter which greeted a rival wag's enquiry whether the Judge intended to make his Oriental beauty wear a yashmak. Stern, a solitary by choice, was unaware of the gibe which had laid such a strain upon Ogilvie's good nature and loyalty. He made up his mind that some sneer of Fitzgerald's had driven Ogilvie into surrendering to the common prejudice. On Fitzgerald he would be revenged, and it was with this resolve in his heart that he was

watching him outside the Hall during prayers on that Friday afternoon of raw darkling fog in the month of March, 1900.

Scarcely had the rumble of Dr Brownjohn's ultimate Amen ceased to reverberate among the shadows of the apse and Combermere turned round to allow the majestic beard of the Headmaster to precede him down the steps from the platform than helter-skelter the junior Classical forms at the back of the Hall and the junior Modern forms up in the gallery were surging out into the corridors to reach their lockers, snatch caps and coats and bags of books, and taste at the earliest possible moment the freedom of the Friday afternoon air outside the school. To-day many of the members of the Classical Upper and Lower Sixths, of the Modern Sixth A and Sixth B, the Mathematical Sixth, and the History Sixth—about fifty boys in all out of a possible eighty or more—instead of making a slightly less undignified dash for the main doors of the school proceeded up to the dining-room where tea awaited the members of the St James's Union Society before the Lent term Debate.

Ordinarily the debates were held once a fortnight in the Union's clubroom next the tuckshop where through the open door junior boys would sometimes catch a glimpse of their seniors lolling at ease in battered wicker chairs over *Graphic* or *Illustrated London News*, as impressive in their own way as the bald-headed clubmen visible along Piccadilly from the top of an omnibus. These debates were held between morning and afternoon school, when they had to compete with the claims of football, and so were attended usually only by the earnest and the bespectacled who found the discussion of motions

like 'That this house regrets the decay of English poetry' a more pleasant and more profitable use of their leisure than being flung violently into touch or wedged in a reeking scrum. Twice a year, however, in March and November, a grand debate was held in the lecture theatre, at which the masters of the various Sixths made a point of speaking and to which distinguished visitors were sometimes lured.

On this occasion Combermere the President had persuaded two Members of Parliament, an Irish Nationalist and the Conservative representative of a West London constituency, to demonstrate not merely the eloquence of the legislature, but also its practical grasp of public affairs. At this date most schoolboys still regarded politicians with something like awe, and the disastrous opening of the South African War had but made them believe more surely that the strongest bulwark of the country was a serried line of Conservative M.P.s standing shoulder to shoulder like the boys of the Old Brigade in the song against the disruptive onset of Little Englanders, Irish Home Rulers, pro-Boers, and Radicals. The Labour Party was not yet considered a serious menace to social stability. Keir Hardie was almost as remote as Marius, John Burns not much nearer than Cleon the tanner.

Over thick tea-cups and thick slices of bread and raspberry jam the members of the Union Society eyed the Nationalist, who may be called Mr Dooley, where he was sitting at the masters' table set on a platform at right angles to the long tables at which the boys ate. His appearance confirmed their belief that the Nationalist Members were not gentlemen, a fact they had already

surmised from the way they behaved in the House of Commons. Yet Mr Dooley's social inadequacy did not beget an amused contempt. Sitting up there between Kirkham of the History Sixth and 'Mouldy' Walters, one of the Stinks masters, the Member for North Conemara seemed to threaten the whole fabric of the Empire, and it was with a welcome feeling of reassurance that the members of the Union Society noted the frosty blue eye, the white moustache as carefully groomed as a horse's tail, the beaky nose, and the impeccable frock-coat of Colonel Yarborough, the honourable and gallant Member for South-East Kensington.

"I shouldn't think there would be enough speakers on the other side to make a debate of it," observed Clinton of the Upper Sixth who besides having won an Exhibition at Jesus College, Oxford, sported a white shirt with blue spots and had managed to grow the heaviest moustache achieved in a generation of Jacobeans. There was a murmur of assent from those who were not too much preoccupied with the speeches they were wondering if they should ever have the nerve to make in front of two Members of Parliament.

"You've got very knowledgeable, Clinton," said Fitzgerald from across the table, "since they offered you five pounds a week to leave school and sit between the Bearded Lady and the Hairy Ainu among the freaks at Olympia."

John Ogilvie guffawed, but the Classical Sixth as a whole received this sally from a Modern with cold disapproval. Clinton flushed angrily.

"Don't get your shirt out," said Fitzgerald quickly, his wide mouth stretched aggressively. "It'll frighten

Colonel Yarborough. My god, Clinton, if I had a face like a sheepdog's — I'd sit on it."

Emil Stern's face hardened when Ogilvie laughed again, but before he could get in with a hit at Fitzgerald, Combermere from the head of the table called for order.

Tea was soon over, and by half-past five the members of the Union were gathered in the lecture theatre, the officers seated round the desk that was usually occupied by the Modern master who used the theatre as a classroom, the rest of them scattered around the tiers of seats and desks that rose in a semicircle around. The masters and the distinguished visitors were accommodated in front of the dais with mahogany chairs upholstered with leather. The motion 'That this House views with mistrust the granting of Home Rule to Ireland' was moved by Gardiner the Treasurer, the son of an Indian Civil Servant who had brought up his family, as far as his official duties allowed him the necessary time at home, to believe that all the subject races of the British Empire were crying out for greater powers to be granted to people like himself in order that they might be governed with the wisdom, the firmness, and the colonizing genius of which in all the world public-school and university men who had entered Her Majesty's service by a competitive examination alone possessed the secret. Gardiner's arguments for the strong hand in Ireland were not much helped by the emotional state of the moment due to consternation over the way the war in South Africa was progressing, and the fact that a number of Irishmen had volunteered to fight for the Boers made it more difficult for the House to resist Gardiner's illustrations from Indian unrest. Gardiner was followed by Burnaby, a

pale square-headed youth in the History Sixth, spotted like a domino with blackheads to which were added coarse-haired eyebrows that met in a myopic scowl. He treated the case for Ireland as a doctrinaire Liberal and, to the amusement of his listeners, quoted a writer of sensational fantasies, one H. G. Wells, to set off some point.

"What extraordinary people you are in the History Sixth," a boy in the Lower Sixth called Merivale, leant over to observe to one Fane who was sitting in the tier below. "Fancy quoting from a fellow who writes serials in magazines."

Fane turned round quickly.

"Burnaby thinks this fellow H. G. Wells is going to be one of our great novelists. But he's dotty, of course. All the same, if I speak I shall speak against the motion," he announced.

"You would," retorted Merivale, with a chuckle, "because the fewer people there are with some fad the more sure you are that they must be right."

"Order! Order!" cried the President, as the Member for South-East Kensington rose, straightening his tie, to assemble the arguments against Home Rule. Colonel Yarborough's manner, while he was repeating with greater assurance a good deal of what Gardiner the opener had already said, suggested that he was almost ashamed to ask such an intelligent audience to waste their time in listening to the obvious. He closed his speech, however, upon a deeper note. Grasping with his left hand the lapel of his frock-coat, he waggled slowly the forefinger of his right hand to emphasize the solemnity of the warning he felt patriotically compelled to utter.

"You may not think it of much importance to the outside world, gentlemen, how you vote upon the motion before you this evening; but I want to tell you as a member of Her Majesty's House of Commons that at a critical moment like this in the history of our beloved country England cannot afford for even one English schoolboy to express what at a time like this I do not hesitate to call opinions subversive of patriotism and disloyal to the great Queen whose subjects we are proud to be. We are now standing back to back, resolved to . . . resolved—er—to . . ."

"Do or die," came in sepulchral tones from the top tier.

"Order! Order!" cried the President, with a severe glance at Ogilvie whom he suspected, and rightly, of having uttered this ill-mannered interjection.

"No, my young friend," said the Member for South-East Kensington, putting up a monocle and fixing with a glance of gentlemanly hauteur the deepening pink cheeks of the plump Schneberger to whom he fancied the President's rebuke had been addressed, "no, my young friend, not to do or die, but to do and live."

Colonel Yarborough let his monocle fall and waited for the murmur of approval he expected from the audience. It was probably not so much out of obsequiousness as nervousness that they responded, led by a junior Mathematical master with less independence than most Lancashire men and a horror of being deemed provincial on account of his north-country accent. A figure of such unmistakable metropolitan elegance as Colonel Yarborough was too impressive for this junior Mathematical master.

"Yes, to do and live," continued the speaker gravely. "The Empire to-day stands united as it was never before united in the presence of a common danger. Our kinsmen overseas are rallying to the flag, rallying to prove to an envious world that the Empire is not a mere name for something which does not really exist, rallying to demonstrate that this Empire on which the sun never sets is as much a perfect whole as the little country that created it. Is this the moment to pass resolutions which will encourage the forces of disruption at the very heart of that Empire? My honourable friend the Member for North Connemara will try to obscure the clearness of your judgment by an eloquent recital of the woes and wrongs of his native land. That wrongs have been done on both sides in the past I shall not deny. But two blacks, gentlemen, two blacks, I insist, do not make a white, and the wrongs of the past are no excuse for committing a much greater wrong in the present. Alas, that it should be so, but we have had it from the mouth of an Irishman that England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity. I am not going to be so unpatriotic as to suggest that England is in danger at the present moment. No, no; Ladysmith was relieved last month, and we may expect with confidence that the relief force will soon bring succour to that gallant little band of defenders in Mafeking."

Cheers from the members of the St James's Union Society broke in upon the peroration of the speaker at this point.

"That is the kind of spirit we want," the Colonel said, when the cheering stopped. "I'm an old military man myself, and I suppose I'm a bit shy, don't you know and all that, of anything in the way of any sort of emotional

display, but when I go down to the House to-night I am going to tell my friend, Mr Joseph Chamberlain . . .”

Here the cheering broke out again.

“Yes, I’m going to tell Mr Chamberlain what a fine spirit I found in this famous old London school, the school which has given so many great names to the Empire’s roll of honour. Still, although it would be in the highest degree unpatriotic to admit that England is in the slightest difficulty, we ought not to shut our eyes to the fact that we have many envious enemies on the Continent, and to those enemies the most trivial sign of disaffection in Ireland is welcome. We cannot afford therefore to show the least weakness in our attitude towards our sister isle. We have the right to demand from Ireland evidence of practical goodwill towards us before we move a step in the direction of even the very mildest extension of Local Government. We have to remember what Home Rule would mean to the grand stalwarts of Ulster, we have to remember the loyal Unionists scattered over the rest of the country. We cannot hand over our supporters and the supporters of this mighty Empire to men who openly uphold the cause of the Queen’s enemies. Gentlemen, notwithstanding the eloquence of my Honourable friend, the Member for North Connemara, I have no anxiety how your votes will be cast this evening.”

Here Colonel Yarborough sat down amid the confident plaudits which salute any speaker who has said exactly what his audience expected he would say.

The Member for North Connemara, however, sprang an oratorical surprise. The Union Society of St James’s School had derived its idea of Irish Members chiefly from the pictures of E. T. Reed in *Punch* and headlines

in the popular press. It expected exaggerated gesture, a stage brogue, and frenzied denunciation. It heard a small man with a trim dark beard talking quietly in a voice which sounded after the previous speaker's voice as if the cork had been drawn from a bottle to let the liquid flow like a purling stream. The case for Ireland as he presented it began to make all the members of the Union feel rather uncomfortable. They looked down to see how the masters were taking it, and discovered nothing but that they were listening with absorption to that small man with the trim dark beard and sombre glittering eyes whose clothes might not be the clothes of a gentleman, but whose voice and glance held one fixed. And this was that Mr Dooley who not so long ago had been carried out of the House for refusing to obey the Speaker. It was incredible. Suddenly the distinguished visitor's upper lip curled over to show his teeth in a fierce snarl of contempt for one of the arguments of the Member for South-East Kensington; but before the audience of schoolboys had time to reflect that at last the Nationalist was showing himself in his true colours the snarl had vanished, and that melodious voice was flowing softly again with its disconcerting recital of Ireland's wrongs. There was not such loud applause for Mr Dooley when he sat down, for he had said none of the things which make it easy to applaud, and his peroration couched in a minor key had made his listeners feel more uncomfortable than ever about the problem they had not been supposing a problem at all. Nevertheless, his was the speech the boys would remember.

"I suppose that's all rot he was saying," one boy whispered to his neighbour.

"Yes, the kind of thing they spout about in Ireland, but it's all rot, of course," replied the neighbour, in a tone of voice which was even less positive than that of him who had asked the question.

The indecision of these two was expressed in the speeches which followed the sudden novel glimpse of patriotism the Irish Member had offered to his hearers. The old arguments were led out, it is true; but they trotted round the arena like lame hacks, and nobody felt that they were able to carry much weight. It was plump Schneberger who was the cause of raising the temperature of the debate. Ever since the Member for South-East Kensington had addressed him as 'my young friend' under the supposition that he had been responsible for that ribald interjection Schneberger had been longing to demonstrate the wholeness of his English feeling. He was less concerned to demolish the case for Irish Home Rule than to express his admiration for 'our' behaviour to the Boers. 'Our' and 'we' recurred with eager insistence throughout his speech. He could not speak of England or even of the Empire objectively, for fear somebody should speak of him objectively as an alien. Schneberger's speech glorifying the nobility of a country to which he formally belonged by the accident of his birth in it fetched to his feet the boy called Fane, and he immediately set out to scandalize the audience by attacking Colonel Yarborough for welcoming cheers as evidence of patriotism.

"In spite of our distinguished visitor's declaration I venture to assert, sir, that the spirit he flattered was just the spirit we do not want in a time of national emergency. Honourable Members of this House may consider that

they are so many Nelsons and Sidneys because they wear buttons with the heads of generals on them, or because they have brothers in the C.I.V. and cousins in the Imperial Yeomanry. Honourable Members may consider themselves so many Pitts and Palmerstons because they applaud cheap jokes at music-halls about Uncle Paul, but if cheers and applause betoken patriotism and if one of our legislators means seriously to tell us that he is willing to accept such an idle noise as valuable, why, God help our statesmanship of the future, say I”

“Order! Order!”

The President rose.

“I must ask the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to control himself, or I shall have to ring him down,” he announced. “And I must request him to speak to the motion.”

“Why, then, I’ll say this, sir,” Fane went on. “We have listened this evening to only one speech in which we could detect the slightest sincerity. That speech was made by the Honourable Member for Connemara, and though I came here this evening slightly prejudiced against the Irish case I must confess that our distinguished visitor has converted me to Home Rule. The rest of the speeches we listened to were like the cackling of so many geese and”

But this was more than the audience could stand. Not even by ‘Bangs’ Fane, who was a fairly popular figure in the world of school, were they going to be called geese.

“Order! Order!”

“Sit down!”

“Apologize!”

"Withdraw!"

"I won't apologize and I won't withdraw," Fane declared.

"Mr President," a bespectacled youth in the gown of a Postmaster of Merton College rose to demand passionately, "is it in order for one honourable member to call other honourable members geese?"

"I must ask the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to withdraw his observation about geese."

"I will withdraw the observation about the cackling of geese and substitute the crackling of thorns," the offending speaker offered.

"That is not a proper withdrawal," the President ruled. "I cannot allow the Honourable Member from the History Sixth to speak further, and I shall call on Mr Kirkham to speak to the motion."

This was an astute move by the President, because Mr Kirkham was Fane's form-master and presumably safe from any attempt by Fane to resist the ruling of the Chair.

Mr Kirkham like most games' masters was a bit of a wag, and he restored the house to good humour by reminding the Honourable and Erudite Member from the History Sixth that it was the cackling of geese which had saved the capitol from the assault of the Gauls, cousins, he believed, of our friends the Irish.

Mr Kirkham's waggery, however pleasing to the majority, roused Edward Fitzgerald, and when the master sat down the lank young Irishman sprang up, his pale blue eyes alight with fury, a flaming spot on each high cheek-bone. He had no intention of being stopped by the President's bell and therefore he avoided personalities; but he denounced England with such savagery that the

audience, forgetting the Nationalist Member's moving presentation of the Irish case, reverted to their ingrained hostility to and deep-seated misunderstanding of Ireland. Fitzgerald, moreover, was a Modern, and although the members of the Modern Sixth had been admitted to the Union a few years ago they were still regarded as intruders from a barbarian world, evidence of which intrusion was plain enough in a fellow like Fitzgerald. The hostility of the audience was made even more acute when at the end of what they considered the speech of a tub-thumping demagogue Fitzgerald with a menacing gesture of his large bony hand turned to the Honourable Member for North Connemara, whose sombre eyes regarding him seemed as large as an owl's:

"And, let me say to you, sir, that the young men of Ireland are growing more than a little weary of their elected representatives. You have now been playing the mountebanks at Westminster so long that if Home Rule were granted to you to-morrow you would hang about the British House of Commons like so many acrobats who had lost their mats and could no longer tumble without cracking their heads. The young men of Ireland will find a way for themselves of freeing their country from the British yoke, and you with your National Conventions and your parlour tricks in the House of Commons and your corner-boys that shout 'Up with ould Ireland' and your gombeen men and your publicans that send round the whisky in the good cause of voting for Tim Healy or Johnnie Redmond will be swept out of history. 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity,' your gallant and honourable friend on the other side of that club you call the House of Commons warned us to-night. He did

well, and I tell him now that it is the harsh truth. And I warn him that the young men of Ireland are waiting for that opportunity."

Fitzgerald threw himself down exhausted, without a hand from the audience in the atmosphere his emotion had created. It was then that Emil Stern, looking no more than fourteen years old, rose to take his revenge on Fitzgerald for Ogilvie's coolness.

The Colonel leant over to enquire of Mr Askew, who was still twitching under the strain of the last speech, the name and status of the newcomer. He was beginning to say to himself that schoolboy debates in these days were very different from what they were when he was at Eton. The master's answer did not reassure the Colonel. He sat upright, tugging impatiently at the ribbon of his monocle. He knew very little about Jews—fortunately they seldom appeared in the Army—but he disliked extremely what he did know of them and had sometimes thought it a pity that the Prince of Wales was so fond of their company.

"Although I come from the same stock, sir, as that which gave this country the primrose-loving premier Benjamin Disraeli, I have to confess that my political sympathies are very far removed from him. If it is possible for one of my age to speak without absurdity of having made up his mind I would claim that my mind was made up before this debate began. And if Mr Burnaby—I mean if the Honourable Member from the History Sixth who opposed the motion said little to strengthen my conviction in favour of Home Rule the Honourable Member from the Upper Sixth who moved the motion certainly said nothing to shake that conviction.

We were reminded by Colonel Yarborough, one of our distinguished visitors to-night, that not even do two blacks make a white. It was a timely reminder, sir, for after listening to the speech of the Honourable Mover, which was based it seemed to me rather upon the Honourable Mover's filial respect for his father's services in India than upon any first-hand acquaintance with the problem he was called upon to put before the House to-night, after listening to that speech, sir, I say, I was under the impression that in the estimation of the Honourable Mover even one black made a white provided that both of them enjoyed the mild and beneficent sway of the ruling English caste, that sway so greatly admired by Mr Schneberger, who must regret he missed the boat by which Hengist and Horsa travelled. Indeed, if we may judge by his use of the first person plural, he seemed anxious to assume a partial responsibility for that sway. Our distinguished visitor Colonel Yarborough will acquit me of any desire to be offensive if I observe that by saying exactly what he was expected to say he could hardly hope to convert anybody to his point of view. He relied, sir, as indeed Conservatives usually do, upon the mental *status quo*. Our other distinguished visitor raised the debate to the level of a serious attempt to contribute toward the solution of the vexed question under discussion, and there can be few of those who listened to that profoundly moving presentation of a nation's wrongs who did not feel at the conclusion of his speech a great deal less sure than when this debate started that the English case against Ireland was a good case. Indeed, sir, I make so bold as to say that the Honourable Mover, in spite of his hereditary knowledge of British India and the skilful

use of it he made to illustrate the present condition of Ireland, would have found himself heavily defeated in the vote this evening if . . .”

The boy paused a moment, and those who had seen his brother Julius on the concert-platform would have been reminded by his expression and attitude of that musical prodigy when he was preparing to give his audience some piece of fiddler's fireworks like the Devil's Trill of Tartini.

“If,” Stern continued sharply, “the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B had not allowed himself to suppose that he could play a better tune on the harp of Tara's halls than one of the elected representatives of the country with whose vengeance he threatened not merely our humble selves but even the whole body of Erin's elected representatives in the House of Commons, a vengeance to be inflicted apparently by himself and his young friends, we may presume, in the guise of Fenians or Whiteboys, and no doubt using the same kindly methods. Mr Dooley pleaded for a wronged nation, but when we heard what Mr Fitzgerald had to say there can be few of us who did not feel uncomfortably doubtful, sir, whether the majority of that nation might not after all consist of braggarts, blusterers, bullies, and half-wits, whose wrongs . . .”

Here Fitzgerald sprang up.

“Mr President, is this personal attack in order?”

“It is the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B who includes himself with the majority, sir,” Stern interjected quickly. “I should have hesitated to believe him typical of anything except himself. However, I will withdraw the epithets he resents and accepting him as a

typical young Irishman call him instead a *malade imaginaire*. Whether by England's enmity or from an ingrained indolence Ireland has been so long now a European no thoroughfare that she has become the prey of her own emotions. Erin is an old beldame who sits by the fireside, dreaming of her youth. She ascribes her wrinkles not to inexorable time but to the aggressive behaviour of her successful brother across the Channel. Mr Fitzgerald has talked—or perhaps I should say shouted—as one of a persecuted race, but where does the persecution of Ireland stand when it is put beside the persecution of the race to which I belong? Do *we* seek the refuge of a narrow nationalism? Oh yes, we have our Zionists, but do not most of us regard them as feeble representatives of our race who cowed by persecution desire to throw up the struggle and revert to the primitive life from which iron circumstance had rescued them in spite of themselves? A Jew like myself who can look back over two thousand years of persecution, yes, and beyond that, has a right to feel pride in what his race has done for humanity notwithstanding or perhaps because of that incessant persecution. What has Ireland done for humanity? And when Ireland gains this illusory freedom by the blood and thunder of Mr Fitzgerald and his young friends, what will they make of it? We heard from our distinguished Irish visitor an outline of what without a sneer may be called a few neat parochial improvements; but from Mr Fitzgerald who spoke so loudly and so boldly and who was so contemptuous of his country's elected representatives we heard not a single constructive suggestion. No, sir, the Honourable Member from the Modern Sixth B lives more irrevocably in the past than the driest and

dustiest of classical scholars. Mr Fitzgerald, sir, is like a broken alarum-clock. The alarum shrills when wound up, but the hands are stationary."

Emil Stern sat down, and those who had heard his brother Julius play might have been once again reminded of him when he used to sit down at the end of a piece of music which he had felt it was not worth while for a boy of his genius to play.

"Bit unhealthy for a youngster like that to be quite so fluent," the Colonel leant over to observe to Mr Askew. "But of course these Orientals develop very early. And I didn't quite like the tone he took with his seniors, though I'm glad he sat on that young Irish bounder. Ah, I see, they're taking the vote now, I think the 'ayes' will have it. Most interesting evening. I was down at Wellington last year at a function like this; but it ran on much more ordinary lines. There's no doubt the mixture you get at a big day school makes for variety. Though it wouldn't do if it went beyond a certain point, of course. I always say you can have too much of a good thing."

"Young Stern wrote the finest set of alcaics I have had from a pupil in all my experience," Mr Askew announced in his rustiest voice.

"Did he?" the Colonel exclaimed. "Well, I'm afraid that sort of thing is rather outside my beat."

"And my colleague Harvey believes him to have the makings of the best Greek scholar ever turned out by the school."

"Interesting, most interesting. Is he any good at games?"

"I shouldn't think so."

"That's the trouble with these brainy youths. No good

at games," reflected the Colonel gloomily. "I don't know where we should be in South Africa now if our fellows hadn't learnt to play the game at school."

"Are we anywhere in particular in South Africa at the present moment?" Mr Askew turned round to ask, his leonine head wagging slowly, his eyelids twitching with extreme rapidity.

"That's pessimism," declared the Colonel, moving back from the schoolmaster as if he were infectious.

Luckily for Colonel Yarborough's equanimity the conversation was interrupted by the President's bell demanding silence for the announcement of the voting.

"That this House views with mistrust the grant of Home Rule to Ireland. For the motion forty-three votes. Against the motion seven votes. The motion is carried."

It was twenty minutes past seven. The Lent term Debate was over.

Emil Stern felt lonely as he turned out of the school building and set out along the sweeping gravel walk to catch an omnibus to High Street, Kensington, the first preliminary of the tedious journey back to Hampstead. He wished he was going to bicycle home with Ogilvie. It had been pleasant to make Fitzgerald look small; but it was not much fun to speak in favour of a motion and then vote against it. It made one feel despicably unreal, as unsubstantial in fact as a profile figure like Colonel Yarborough. Besides, his speech had only been a success because it had scored off a chap whom the other chaps

wanted to be scored off. A cheap sort of success, that. And now, he supposed, the break with Ogilvie was final. There were footsteps behind him on the gravel. He turned round, half hoping it was his friend. But it was Fane and Merivale walking arm-in-arm, walking quickly in the frore air of the March night.

"Hello, Stern, that was a very *Cicero in Catilinam* speech you made," said Fane. "But I voted against you. In fact I agreed with most of what Fitzgerald said."

The younger boy wanted to reply that he himself had voted on the same side as Fane, but he felt that would make Fane think him quite impossible. Although a few days ago he would not have minded what Fane thought, he now desired to propitiate almost anybody, and Fane seemed to him much more worth while than the majority of his fellows.

"Look here, we've had enough politics for to-night," Merivale put in. "Which way are you going, Stern?"

"I'm going to wait for a High Street bus."

The two friends passed on arm-in-arm, and left Stern to cross the road alone.

No chance of seeing Ogilvie till Monday, and when they met then they would meet no doubt as strangers. The boy boarded a red omnibus and jogged miserably along inside to High Street, reading over and over again by the flickering light of the oil-lamps the advertisement in which a leading Q.C. extolled to the lean and bearded Mr Lamplough the virtues of his Pyretic Saline.

John Ogilvie himself had been actually so much fascinated by the virtuosity of Stern's performance that, if he had not been sitting next to Edward Fitzgerald and thus been made almost painfully aware of the torment his

friend's vanity was suffering, he would have had to express his admiration and let the world of school think what it liked. It was impossible, however, when he could hear Fitzgerald vowing beneath his breath that he would wring that circumcised little bastard's neck, to congratulate the inspirer of such fury. As it was, he accepted Fitzgerald's invitation to come round to 'our place' for a while before he went home. 'Our place' was in Trelawny Road hardly more than seven minutes away from the school.

As they walked along, Ogilvie leading his bicycle in the gutter close to the kerb, Fitzgerald continued to rail at the evening.

"I suppose you think like the rest of them that I was just spouting for the sake of hearing my own voice; but I tell you, Judge, I meant every word of what I said. These damned English simply cannot understand the Irish point of view. They treat us like assassins, but in their hearts they believe we secretly look up to them. I've actually heard them argue that the last people who would welcome Home Rule would be the people of Ireland. The smug fatuous turnip-heads! And we have to thank the Nationalist Party for that. I verily believe that those sons of bitches would be staggered if Home Rule was actually offered to them. They can talk, my God, how they can talk! But if they had to act they'd be lost. You'll hear them arguing with their British friends down at the House that in spite of a few noisy extremists Ireland is fundamentally loyal to the Empire. 'Look at the Irish regiments,' they'll say. And then they'll whine for piers and post-offices, and the Chief Secretary will shower piers and post-offices round the west till there are more piers

than boats and more post-offices than letters. Thank God Gladstone *didn't* get his Home Rule Bill through, thank God Parnell *did* chase O'Shea's wife, thank God the Nationalist Party *is* a pack of jealous quarrelsome old women! Every year which goes by without getting Home Rule brings us twenty years nearer to independence."

"You really do want to be completely separated from England?" Ogilvie asked.

"As separate as Portugal from Spain or Denmark from Prussia," Fitzgerald declared.

"But surely most of the Irish don't want separation?"

"In their hearts, all of them; but so many of them are afraid it won't pay. Look at my father. He'd be counted a loyal Nationalist going over to Kerry at every election to vote against the Unionist; but his practice is in London. I'm at school in London. I shall walk a London hospital. I might just as well be a bloody Englishman."

"Well, so might I," said Ogilvie, "though I don't believe I have a drop of English blood in my veins. But you know, Fitz, I'm afraid it's too late for independence. The time for independence was before the French Revolution. There was still enough worth preserving then."

"Is it too late? It might be too late for a Scotchman. He always did take the cash and let the credit go."

"No, he didn't. What about the Forty-five?"

"Well, what about the Forty-five? That wasn't a fight for a nation's freedom. That was sucking up to Bonny Prince Charlie."

"You're a liar. You might as well call the Battle of the Boyne sucking up to James the Seventh."

"Who's he, anyway?"

"Well, James the Second, if your history is so rotten

as all that. Anyway, it was the Irish who messed up the Battle of the Boyne."

"It was not. It was the bloody French."

"Good Lord, man, what's the use of arguing with somebody who knows no history? And don't talk about 'Scotchmen'."

"To hell with history! That's just like a bloody North Briton. He feeds his emotion with dates, but he feeds his belly from English money."

Ogilvie laughed.

"Shut up, Fitz. It's no use starting a slanging match about things that happened a century or two ago. There's been enough jawing to-night."

They had reached the lamp-post at the corner of Trelawny Road by now. The grey brick houses, losing perfect definition in the acrid foggy air, ran like a line of low cliffs on either side of the road, their lighted windows seeming remote as the windows on shore beheld from the sea. When John Ogilvie looked back to this commonplace nocturne in the continuously shrinking years of the future he always saw himself and Edward Fitzgerald standing minute in a chasm of those nightmare houses which unfettered sleep builds as fast as thought; but the face of his friend so greenish white in the sad glow of the incandescent gaslight grew larger in memory, the glittering pale blue eyes more bright, the wide eloquent mouth more red, the thin fanatic nose more peaked, the cheek-bones more gaunt, until in fancy that face was suspended like a decapitated head, incarnating the will which overcame that weak body, so minute and feeble even beside the houses of everyday urban existence, the houses of men crawling between earth and heaven.

"You think I'm just jawing, Judge," Fitzgerald said. "One day you'll find that my jawing meant something. You see, I know that Ireland demands a sacrifice of blood."

"You mean by active rebellion?"

"I mean by death."

"Fitz, I believe you really would die fighting for your country."

"You don't yet understand. It's not just fighting for her that Ireland needs. It's not dying for her like the boys of '98 that Ireland needs. That's a warm way of death. I mean the cold death of the man who dies to prove himself right. I don't yet know just how I shall gain such a death, but I do know that somehow I shall gain it. Oh, hell, let's go in. If you put your bike over the railings and lean it against the surgery wall it'll be all right."

Ogilvie had already been to the Fitzgerald's house several times. The Doctor was a burly amiable man with a big beard, not unlike W. G. Grace the cricketer to look at. In spite of his size his voice was as soft as the Kerry air, and he had kept the sing-song brogue of the South-west. Probably he had never been capable of feeling so strongly about things as his son; but if he ever had, the need of building up a practice in London had long ago made him keep to himself his political beliefs. It is the exile's children who do not compromise—they either hate the place and people of their exile or surrender to them completely and forget they are aliens. Dr Fitzgerald still owned a few acres of bog and a tumbledown house on the banks of Caragh which, to Edward's resentment but to his father's relief, were let to a retired English naval captain. It was from his mother who had

been an O'Mahony that Edward inherited his fanaticism. Not that Mrs Fitzgerald was politically a fanatic. All her strength of positive feeling was expended on religion. While Edward pored over the lives of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmett and his own namesake, Mrs Fitzgerald read the lives of the saints. While Edward bicycled to the remotest suburbs for a chance to listen to talk of Irish politics in a sympathetic ambient, his mother went wandering by herself round obscure little Catholic churches in the slums. Once Edward had the joy of actually meeting one of the old Fenians who had suffered a long term of penal servitude, and when he confided to his mother the awe he had felt in the presence of that prematurely withered little man sitting by a Dulwich fireside she responded with her experience of listening to a famous French Dominican preaching at Haverstock Hill. Yet she had been able to instil enough of her own faith into her only son to make him an observant Catholic, and she was able to comprehend sufficiently his passionate political beliefs to make her a sympathetic confidante, and at the same time to urge the worthlessness of setting Ireland free except to bring the country nearer to God.

"As near as Ireland was, avic, in the Dark Ages when there alone shone the peace of God," she used to say, her own pale blue eyes glittering.

Mrs Fitzgerald had been over thirty when she married. She was at this date fifty-four, but she looked older. Her two eldest children had died in early youth, but besides Edward she had a daughter, Ellen, now just nineteen, a buxom girl with high colour and deep laughing grey-blue eyes, offered always as a typical colleen by her father when he presented her to his patients. For some reason

which Mrs Fitzgerald had spent many hours upon her knees trying in vain to discover from the Blessed Virgin, from St Monica on whose day she had been born, and from St Catherine of Genoa for whom she had a special devotion, Ellen was determined to go on the stage. Even if Ellen had been able to demonstrate to her mother that she burned with the genius of a Duse, Mrs Fitzgerald would have thought the stage an unsuitable profession; but being unable to feel anything except an emotion of faint embarrassment when her daughter recited at home, to which embarrassment was added an acute dismay when she performed at dramatic entertainments even in aid of Catholic charities, she regarded Ellen's ambition as akin to lunacy. However, Ellen had got round her father, and she was now attending the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art from which she hoped this very year to secure a professional engagement on tour.

On this March evening Ellen had invited a fellow-student to supper, with the intention of occupying the drawing-room afterwards in rehearsing the scenes between Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, a production of which comedy was to be given by the School of Dramatic Art at the Bijou Theatre, Notting Hill Gate, after Easter.

"Ellen, my darling, I don't care for this mummary in Lent," her mother had protested.

"But, mother, it's not pleasure," Ellen had explained.

"Isn't it? It seems to me that you and this friend of yours get a great deal of pleasure out of all this attitudinizing and speechifying. Is it work you're trying to tell me it is?"

"Of course, it's work. And jolly hard work too when

we have to read the parts of Orlando and Touchstone as well as go through our own."

"I don't know about Orlando and Touchstone, but your father let out that you'd be dressed up as a boy, and that I will *not* go and shame myself by watching. I've arranged with Father Peters to make a fortnight's retreat at the Convent, which shall make such an ordeal impossible."

The Fitzgerald household was sitting down to supper when the boys came in.

"Oh, cheers," declared Ellen, "here's Ogilvie. He can read Orlando for us when we rehearse."

John Ogilvie was on the point of giving an emphatic contradiction to this assertion when he caught the eyes of Ellen's friend.

They were eyes the nearest to being black he had ever seen, and there was such a warmth of appeal in their lustrous depths that he found himself volunteering to do whatever was required of him, without considering for a moment the possibility of making an ass of himself, the most important factor in any decision John Ogilvie had to take at this stage of his life.

"You *are* a good sport," said Miss Constance Fenwick, "we shall be able to have a ripping rehearsal now. And perhaps Edward will read Touchstone."

"The hell Edward will," snapped Edward. It was clear that Fitz was immune from Miss Fenwick's dusky witcheries, and John Ogilvie found himself wondering whether thinking a girl looked like a gipsy would be considered a compliment by the girl herself. Her hair was really black, and the black lock which curled down behind her ear to the nape of her neck was bloomed like a

grape. She had a jolly good figure too. In fact she was a jolly good-looking girl, and that rich flush made her cheeks seem like peaches. No doubt people were always comparing girls' cheeks to peaches, but this girl's cheeks really were like peaches. Her teeth too were very white when she smiled, and her lips were as red as . . .

"I'd rather have it well done, thanks, Dr Fitzgerald . . ."

As red as . . . well, it was a fascinating mouth. Probably what should be called a passionate mouth. And that lightly pencilled upper lip was fascinating too . . .

"Yes, thanks, I'll take some horseradish sauce."

Yet if he had been asked before this evening whether he admired girls with the faint beginnings of a moustache . . .

"I'd rather drink beer, Dr Fitzgerald."

"And how did the debate go?" the Doctor enquired.

"I'm afraid Home Rule lost," said John quickly. "But Fitz made a ripping speech. And so did the Irish Member. At least, I thought so. But Fitz was rather down on him."

"And so did the Infant Samuel," Edward interjected.

John laughed.

"That's a good name for Stern. And nobody ever thought of it before, what's more."

On the Judge's appreciation Edward Fitzgerald began to forget his grievance against the evening, and after supper he amused himself in a corner of the drawing-room, jeering at the rehearsal. John too enjoyed the rehearsal, particularly when he found himself standing in the wrong place and Miss Constance Fenwick thought it necessary to take him by the arm and put him where he ought to be standing.

"Though I don't know why I make such a fuss," she

declared, with a raking glance at John, "because after all *you* will not be playing in *As You Like It*."

The possibility of going on the stage flitted across John's mind. Constance could be very little older than himself. They might yet play Romeo and Juliet together.

"You know, Mr Ogilvie, I think you'd make a better Touchstone. I think you read that last speech to Celia most awfully well," said Miss Fenwick. "I think your line is humour."

"Oh, the Judge is famous for his judicial jokes," Fitz informed her.

"Why do you call him that? Am I very dense?" asked Miss Fenwick, staring with what John considered was the most ravishing expression of perplexity he had beheld on the human countenance.

"J. P. Ogilvie. That's his nickname," Fitz explained.

John had been slightly depressed by Miss Fenwick's suggestion that his reading of the love-lorn Orlando was inferior to his delivery of Touchstone's quips; but he consoled himself by remembering that the clown was secretly in love with Celia and that Miss Fenwick was going to play Celia, not Rosalind.

"Well, you needn't call me Mr Ogilvie," was what he said.

"Call him Judge," Fitz advised.

"John is my name," the owner of it protested. He wanted no reminders from Miss Constance Fenwick that he was still at school. 'Mr Ogilvie' to be sure recognized his status, but it was distant, and distance where Miss Fenwick was concerned did not appeal to John.

At the end of the rehearsal, the hour being half-past ten,

Miss Fenwick said she must fly or her father would slaughter her. John was almost simultaneously struck with the lateness of the hour, but took care not to mention that Hampstead was his destination. He was resolved to escort Miss Fenwick to her door and did not want an argument about its being too far out of his way. Ellen Fitzgerald, who knew her friend's delight in conquest, even were her victim but a schoolboy, won John's gratitude by asking if he would mind seeing Connie home. It seemed there had been one or two unpleasant incidents of molestation in the fog lately reported to the police.

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of troubling Mr . . . John," flashed rather than said Miss Fenwick as she let him help her into a long dark-red coat with a collar of black bear-skin which deliciously brushed his cheek as she turned it up and wafted upon him a faint Oriental-seeming perfume in a fugitive breath.

John decided that his best line was action not argument. He grabbed his bowler from the hat-rack and followed Miss Fenwick resolutely down the front-door steps. For a moment he was inclined to leave his bicycle and pick it up after he had escorted her safely home, for he dreaded the effect of such a distracting encumbrance; but he was afraid that any discussion about the bicycle would prematurely reveal that he had to go as far as Hampstead, in which case Miss Fenwick might insist on seeing herself home.

"You won't mind my taking this beastly thing along, will you?"

"Why, of course. I think it's so sweet of you to bother about me."

The door of the grey corner house in Trelawny Road

had closed. They were alone with the fog and the lamp-posts and the acrid air of the London night which to John was smelling sweet as violets.

"I wonder if you know my young brother?" the girl asked. "He is at St James's."

"On the Classical side?"

"No, he's in Army C. There is a class called Army C, isn't there?"

"Oh, rather. But I don't think I know him. How old is he?"

"Let me see. Rupert is fourteen."

By Monday, John decided, he would have made himself so pleasant to Fenwick of Army C, that Fenwick of Army C, preparing for his journey through the trigonometrical wastes of the Mathematical side, would wonder how he had existed before getting to know J. P. Ogilvie of the Classical Lower Sixth.

"Is he like you to look at?"

"No, not a bit. He's got sandy hair."

Although John regretted that he would not behold the image of his sister in Fenwick of the Army C, in view of that remark about the yashmak apropos of his friendship with Stern, he was a little relieved to hear that Fenwick was not a dark beauty, and perhaps (difficult to fancy certainly of her brother) not a beauty at all.

"I'll get to know him on Monday," John promised.

"Poor Rupert will probably be rather overcome, for I suppose you are one of what he calls the 'bloods'?"

"Well, I'm only in the Second Fifteen. You see, I simply can't be bothered to think about nothing except footer."

As soon as he had said that John wished he hadn't. It

sounded sidy, as if he could get his school colours whenever he condescended to try for them seriously.

"I'm afraid I'm no use at games at all," she told him.

"Why should you be? As a matter of fact, I think girls look pretty ghastly playing games."

"That's very Early Victorian of you."

"Is it? Well, surely you don't think a girl rigged out to keep goal at hockey is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever?"

"We never play hockey at my school."

"Good for you. I say, there's a Second Fifteen match on the school ground to-morrow. We're playing one of the hospitals." Yes, thought John, and here was one of the three-quarters wandering along with a girl at a quarter to eleven, an hour or more away from bed. "I suppose you couldn't come, Miss Fenwick?"

"I might if you would be a trifle less ceremonious . . . John." She flashed a look at him from beneath her black three-cornered hat, and never did flintlock of highwayman's pistol win a more swift surrender. They were passing a lamp-post, and rather than step an inch away from that look John let his bicycle fall that he himself might keep on the pavement.

"Will you come, Connie?"

"I hope you haven't twisted the pedal?"

"Oh, bother the pedal! Will you come, Connie?"

"Well, if it's a fairly decent day and if Rupert will bring me and if you would like me to come very much, why, I'll . . . think seriously about it to-morrow."

And that was as much as John could make her promise before too soon they reached the portico of the grey house in Gladwyn Road where the Fenwicks lived.

"Do come to the match to-morrow, Connie."

"Perhaps . . . but you can come in for a moment. Father will give you a drink."

"Isn't it too late?"

"Why, it's not much after half-past ten. We never go to bed before midnight, anyway. And as a matter of fact father always likes to have a look at my young men. He's completely old-fashioned, but he's a darling. Oh, and one word of warning. Don't say anything against Jacobites."

"Against Jacobites? I'm not likely to," he said fervidly. "I'm a Jacobite myself."

The only superficial indication of Mr Fenwick's old-fashioned attitude toward the present was his wearing of a smoking-cap. He was a tall thin man with a long aristocratic face, and the drooping moustache of that dead grey to which sandy hair turns gave him a general effect of weakness. He reminded John of the conventional representations of Don Quixote. Mrs Fenwick looked many years younger than her husband, being as round and plump as he was meagre. Connie's fine features came from her father, but her gipsy air was an inheritance from Mrs Fenwick who still had jet-black hair, seeming blacker against the rice-powder with which her faded complexion was plentifully bedabbled. It was easy to see exactly what Mrs Fenwick had been twenty years ago in her elder daughter Hetty who was as dark as Connie, but ivory-pale and plump. She like her mother had her hair turned up over a comb in the Japanese style. It did not take John long to realize that Mr Fenwick had married not merely a woman much younger than himself, but one considerably beneath him socially. He could not bring himself to admit that Connie's mother was positively

common: he thought that to stamp her mentally as 'suburban' was being disloyal enough. Besides, what did it matter what so kind and hospitable and unpretentious a woman was?

"The Bonny House of Airrie, eh?" Mr Fenwick commented when his daughter introduced John Ogilvie.

"Some way back, sir, I'm afraid."

"And he's a Jacobite, father," Connie pressed upon his attention.

Mr Fenwick's dull globular eyes gleamed. Then he looked over his young visitor as if he were sizing up his worthiness to so honourable a title.

"Do you belong to one of our societies?" he asked.

"No, but I should like to," said John eagerly.

"We shall have to see about that. So you've been standing by with a prompt-book, eh? Isn't that the correct jargon? My daughter Constance is turning my house into a regular green-room, what? I feel a complete Roscius. You're not on the stage yourself?"

"No, no," said John. "As a matter of fact I'm at St James's School."

"By gad, are you? You look more than a schoolboy. But I suppose I'm judging by my boy Rupert's young friends."

John felt like shaking his host warmly by the hand and congratulating him on being one of the few people of genuine perspicacity he had hitherto met.

"Is it in order for me to offer you a whisky and soda?" Mr Fenwick continued.

"No, thanks, sir."

"But a glass of beer, eh? And I expect you smoke?"

"Oh, rather."

"You'll find these cigars very mild. Try one, won't you?"

"I'd rather smoke a cigarette, sir, if you don't mind. As a matter of fact I've got a match—a rugger match, I mean—to-morrow afternoon." John looked round. "I think Connie's going to turn up. I suppose you wouldn't care to come too, sir? We're playing a team from Bart's—from St Bartholomew's Hospital. There's not much of a squash at Second Fifteen matches."

"Ah, I don't think I dare risk standing about in this March air."

"I told you, John, that I would come if I could," Connie reminded him a little severely.

"I'd like awfully to go," said Hetty suddenly from the other end of the room.

John looked over to her, his face glowing with a warmth of affectionate gratitude. Here was a sister fit to place beside Antigone.

"Well, do come, please."

The clock on the mantelpiece chimed the first quarter after eleven. He must tear himself away.

"We shall be very glad if you will come back to tea, Mr Airlie, after the match is over," said Mrs Fenwick.

"No, no, sweetheart," said her husband, stroking his moustache and smiling courteously down at his plump little wife. "Ogilvie is our friend's name."

"But I thought you called him Airlie, Aylmer."

"Lord Airlie is the head of the Ogilvies, sweetheart."

Mrs Fenwick shook her head. Twenty-one years of married life had not made her move easily through the pageant of her husband's mind.

"You seem to have won my family in a very dashing fashion, John," Connie said to him by the front-door.

"But they were so ripping to me. Connie, you will come to-morrow?" he pressed anxiously.

"Does it matter now whether *I* come or not? You heard what Hetty said?"

"Still, I want *you* to come."

He was holding her hand in farewell.

"So much as all that?" she murmured, her eyes drowning him in their depths.

"And much much more," he breathed chokily.

Then hardly aware of what he was doing he bent over and kissed the tip of her hand.

"Happy dreams," she murmured, in that sweet low voice of hers, as the latch of the front-door clicked.

"Now, did I make a frightful ass of myself?" John demanded of his bicycle as he lighted the lamp and mounted it to ride northward through the empty night, a meaningless façade of shuttered shops and closed houses streaming past him, who seemed to himself to be motionless.

It was twenty minutes past twelve when John reached Church Row, Hampstead, and looked up a little anxiously at the light in his father's library.

Alexander Ogilvie was a successful barrister of forty-six, just about to take silk, a Common Law man with a great reputation at the Central Criminal Court for achieving the impossible on behalf of murderers and

burglars, and he had been conspicuous in one or two sensational libel cases. A practice like his did not give him the wealth of the Chancery Bar, but it had brought him into the public eye, which meant more to Alexander Ogilvie, and with the recent development of the popular press he was beginning to occupy the same kind of position as a successful actor-manager. A handsome somewhat florid man with a beautiful voice, the gift of dramatic expression, much emotional power, and plenty of solid ability, he had chosen his profession well. No man at the Bar could contemplate his future with greater equanimity.

Alexander Ogilvie's father had become the minister of one of the best-known Presbyterian churches in London after service abroad as chaplain to a Highland regiment and later as a minister in Bombay. He had married late in life Annette Boissier, the daughter of a French Protestant pastor, by whom he had three sons before she died of a fever in India. Of these the eldest son now held an important post in the Chinese Customs, the second was in the Education Office, and the third was Alexander. The old man had died some ten years before the present date, much venerated by his well-to-do congregations whose consciousness of being godly and prosperous Scots living cannily upon an inferior nation he never said a word to disturb.

In 1881, when Alexander Ogilvie was on circuit, he had met at a dinner-party during the Bodmin Assizes Athene Pendarves, the only daughter of a Cornish squire of ancient lineage renowned both as a classical and a Celtic scholar all over Europe.

She was then near the end of her twentieth year, a

dark delicate slip of a maid, who fell deeply in love with the handsome young barrister. Her father whose estate was entailed upon a second cousin managed to rake together seven thousand pounds for a dowry, so that his daughter might marry the man she wanted, for he had never denied Athene anything he could by any possible means grant her. The married couple took a little house in Westminster, which Athene made beautiful in accordance with the standards of the æsthetic movement, but where in the river mists her health languished. By the end of 1889 the growth of Alexander's practice had warranted a move up to Church Row, Hampstead, from the air of which he hoped his wife would benefit. However, a few months later Athene died, leaving her husband with John who was then just over eight years old.

It had been by Athene Ogilvie's desire that her only child had been put down for St James's. A faint flicker of dormant nationality in her husband had suggested one of the Scottish schools modelled on the English public-school idea as more suitable. His wife's death stopped that plan. It was due to her memory that John should go to the school she had chosen for him, even although the chief reason for his going there, which was not to be separated from his mother, was now tragically nullified.

So John at eight years old had entered Randell's, the preparatory school for St James's, and at twelve he had passed on from there to the great red pile on the other side of the road.

The relationship between the boy and his father had always been pleasant enough superficially, but there was

no intimacy. Alexander Ogilvie knew far better any one of those clients he had saved from a lagging at Dartmoor than he knew his son, and without exaggeration he could be said to have felt a profounder affection for the men he had saved from the gallows than he could feel for John. During the last year John's rapid development into a handsome youth of seventeen had played upon his father's jealousy, on that jealousy from which few men whose worldly success is founded upon the exploitation of personality remain free. The father could not help resenting the way his son gave the impression of thinking that his father, a man in the prime of life, belonged to an earlier epoch of humanity. He recognized how absurd it was to feel touchy over this attitude. He recognized that such an attitude was evidence not of his own age but of his son's youth. Yet he remained irritated, and his irritation took the form of stressing wherever and whenever he could the youthfulness of John, which by an easy process of self-deception he was able to suppose was the natural anxiety of a father for his son's moral welfare.

"Well, this is a good time to arrive home," said Alexander Ogilvie, looking up from the brief he was studying to note the time by the travelling-clock on his writing-table—that clock which had been his dead wife's wedding-present to him and the elfin chime of which striking the hours brought back more vividly than pictures or photograph, herself. To take this clock from the square case of crimson morocco-leather when he wound it up every week was to take her from the coffin, and in the delicate pulsations of the mechanism visible within the crystal to seem to hold once again her sentient form. And when he put back the key in the slot he

would notice the dust which would have gathered on the violet velvet lining of the leather case and remember how dust had always worried poor Athene, dust herself now.

"Where on earth have you been, my boy?"

"Well, it was the Lent term Debate, and afterwards I went back to supper with a chap called Fitzgerald. I couldn't have been back in time for dinner. I told Watson before I went to school and asked her to tell you."

"But what time did you leave your friend Fitzgerald?"

"It was after a quarter-past eleven. It's Friday. I've got all to-morrow and Sunday for my home work."

John spoke a little irritably because it annoyed him that his father's lack of sympathy should warn him to omit any mention of the Fenwicks and thus drive him into telling what practically amounted to a lie.

"Thanks, I did know what day of the week it was," said his father sarcastically. "But that's hardly the point. If you want to keep hours like this you'll have to consult me. You won't find me unreasonable, John. I realize you expect more liberty during these last two years of school, but you are still only seventeen, and you can't come in half an hour after midnight as a matter of course."

"Well, when have I done it before except after dances?" John asked in a tone of too deliberate patience to placate his father.

"We're not discussing what you've done on other evenings. We're discussing the casual way in which you ask Watson to let me know that you will not be in to dinner and then do not turn up till half-past twelve."

"It wasn't particularly casual. I told her to explain about the debate."

"Even if Watson had been able to give me your message in full, which of course she couldn't do, having no notion what a debate is, that still doesn't absolve you from being casual. Can't you see that? Why not have added that you were going to supper with this friend of yours and so might be a little late? Damn it, John, I'm the most reasonable of fathers, and should perfectly have understood."

"But I didn't know Fitz was going to ask me to supper."

"Exactly, and therefore when you accepted his invitation you should have made it clear that you would have to get away by ten at the latest."

"Well, Ellen Fitzgerald wanted me to read some Shakespeare for her."

"Oh, really? I didn't know your talents ran in that direction."

"They don't particularly, but she's acting Rosalind in *As You Like It* for the dramatic school she's at, and she wanted to practise her part," said John wearily. "I'm sorry I'm so late, but I didn't think it would matter for once on a Friday evening."

"All right, we'll say no more about it. You'd better get off to bed. Have you got a match to-morrow?"

"Yes, we're playing Bart's."

"Well, I'm doing nothing to-morrow afternoon. I might come and watch you," suggested Alexander Ogilvie, who now that John had expressed regret felt magnanimous and anxious to show him what an amount of paternal interest was at his service if he chose to avail himself of it.

"Oh, I don't think you'd better come to-morrow. It'll be a rotten match," John exclaimed, and with a hasty good night slipped from the library before his father had time to ask any more questions and make any more awkward proposals.

Alexander Ogilvie tossed aside the typewritten folios he had been studying, lit a final cigar, and settled down to read the current number of *Blackwood's*. The reminiscences of empire-builders failed to hold his attention, and remembering that he had not yet read his *Westminster Gazette* he picked up the 'sea-green incorruptible' and absorbed some of its pessimism about the conduct of the war. He supposed that if he intended to go in for politics he ought to contest a seat at the next election. Would the Tories take advantage of the more strenuous efforts now being made to face unpleasant facts in South Africa and go to the country with a 'win the war' policy? In the present condition of public hysteria they would probably sweep the polls. There was not much chance of getting anywhere as a Conservative, and after all he *was* a Liberal. If he fought a difficult seat at the next election he could hardly fail to get a good one at the election after. And there was bound to be a reaction. Yes, but when? And did he want a political career? Were the particular qualities which had brought him to the fore as a criminal advocate going to count for so much in the House of Commons? And did not politics always involve a man in complications from which at present he himself was mercifully free? What extraordinary beings boys were! John had evidently been quite taken aback by his suggestion to go down and see him play to-morrow afternoon. Self-conscious, of course.

But how did one become friends with one's own son? If Athene had lived she would have known how to bring it about. Perhaps he ought to have married again. The right woman would have known how to be a second mother to John. She would have kept him from regarding his father as a centenarian. These next years were going to be difficult. John would come into his mother's money at twenty-one. No time away now. He must have a serious talk with his son about the future. He would be going to the University in the October of next year. Had John really been with these Fitzgeralds to-night? Or had he been fooling around with some servant-wench? It would have been better really to send him to a boarding-school. It had been a mistaken loyalty to Athene to send him to St James's. How little he knew about John! And how little John knew about him! This relationship between father and son ought to be simple enough. There must be a great deal of himself in John. Why could he not recognize it? How did the product of a union between two people who had loved each other as well as he and Athene had loved manage to be a human creature more incomprehensible than any of the strangers he met? He could certainly recognize in John the outward features of his mother. He had her smile, her eyes. He could even recognize his own mouth and his own boyish complexion in John. But not once since John had been born had he been able to say of action or emotion or opinion, 'That's myself all over again.'

This strangeness to him made him wonder now if he had ever really understood Athene, because the strangeness could not be an effect without cause. It must be the unknown quantity in Athene. Yet, surely Athene

had loved him? That stormy April sunset of tattered cloud when they had walked home across the moors to Pendarves House, and the sudden stillness out of the wind among the rhododendrons. A blackbird had flown shrilling across the mazy path through the tangled shrubbery, and Athene had clutched his arm in affright, and a moment later he had folded her to his heart. Athene's father had understood. When they came into his study where he was reading some ragged calf-bound tome in the small circle of light cast by his green-shaded lamp, he had dropped the volume, and leaning back into the dimness beyond his lamp he had murmured, 'So, you are going to take her away from me, Ogilvie?' And Athene had run forward and kissed him and cried, 'Oh, darling, I'm afraid he must.' And the old man . . . old man? Why, he would be as old himself in another five years. . . . It was incredible. . . . Athene's father had said, 'I'm not going to claim she is all I have, Ogilvie, because the man who claims that is either a sentimental liar or an empty-headed noodle, but she *is* a very great deal, and so I think I'll open the last bottle of that port I was telling you about.'

Yes, John Pendarves must have believed that he would make Athene happy. And had not she herself pulled faintly at his hand just before the end and whispered when he leant over her, 'Such a short time, Alec, but oh, such a happy time!' Yet, *had* he known her? Had she not remained through all those eight years elusive? Had he not often felt that she never wished to hear about his cases? The first time she had come to his chambers she had looked with a shudder at the dusty volumes of legal lore and dusty blue heaps of old papers

and the cracked seals: 'I shan't come here again, Alec. I should wither up like poor Hackett.' And Hackett, his clerk, neither more nor less withered, was still with him, still behind him everywhere, impersonal as one of the leaves of the plane-trees in the Embankment gardens and slipping along behind him up the worn stone steps of the Temple, down the worn stone steps of the Temple, up the stairs of the Old Bailey, down the stairs of the Old Bailey, slipping behind him through the people waiting in that entrance hall so like a glorified urinal, slipping along like a dead leaf. Had Hackett a son? In the twenty-five years of their association he had never asked him. Had Hackett a son in whom he could perceive something of himself before he withered, before whatever moisture left to him was needed to lick the pencil with which every word spoken at those conferences was taken down? 'But, Athene, I'm a human lawyer.' 'There are only two kinds of lawyers, Alec: the ones that turn to dry sticks and the ones that grow fat on human misery. Don't grow fat, Alec, I'd prefer you to wither like poor Hackett.' He had wanted to argue with her. He had wanted to ask how they could have such a jolly little house in Westminster unless he were devoted to his profession. But it had not seemed right to argue with her. Maybe he had known in his heart that she would not be his long enough to make the slightest argument anything but a waste of the little time they still had.

The elfin chimes of the travelling-clock upon the table struck two. Alexander Ogilvie threw off his reverie, and went upstairs to bed.

John had long ago fallen asleep to thoughts of Con-

stance Fenwick, and beside his bed were the poems of Byron open at the verse which began:

*She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies.*

The east wind began to blow at dawn, strongly enough to clear away the fog, but not strongly enough to conjure blue from the grey sky. Still, it must be considered a fine day for the time of year, John decided, when at eight o'clock he stood by the dormer-window of his room at the top of the old Georgian house and looked down across the swaying bare trees of the Hampstead gardens to the roofs and towers and chimney-tops and spires of London, seeming etched upon that fume of smoke which never, no matter how bright the weather might be, left the mighty city clear.

Surely on such a day Connie would not disappoint him. Even on the wettest Saturdays the view appeared more spacious than on other days because it was free from the menacing tedium of school or church, but on this Saturday the thought of Connie made it infinite. Surely she could not disappoint him. John hoped that the rather stodgy Second Fifteen pack would heel decently and that Williams and Gallagher, the halves, would remember that this was a three-quarters' day and not start playing ping-pong with each other. Perhaps there was rather too much wind for the most accurate kicking into touch, but the ball would be dry and the

passing should be good. He wondered if anything more would be heard of that disconcerting proposal of his father's last night to watch the match. It would be prudent to be buried in his work when his father came down to his breakfast at ten o'clock. In any case, it would be as well to get that idiotic epigram finished for Askew and as much as possible of the rest of his work done in case the Fenwicks asked him to stay on to supper. Then at lunch he could tell his father that he had had an invitation and might not be in to dinner. He would have to leave the house by half-past one to be changed in time. That would cut short the argument.

By nine o'clock John was seated at the table in the back dining-room where he always worked. The folding-doors were closed between him and the front dining-room, and more usefully between him and the view of Church Row where even the passage of a whistling errand-boy was enough to distract him from the dull task in hand. At his left hand was Lewis and Short's Latin-English Dictionary, Carey's *Gradus Ad Parnassum*, and a small volume of Martial's Epigrams Selected for the Use of Schools. Propped up against a stationery-rack was the notebook containing the idiotic verses set by Askew. It would require a deuce of a lot of padding to make eight hexameters and pentameters out of this. Sapphics would really be the most effective metre. But did Martial ever use sapphics? John turned over the pages of the chaste anthology. Oh well, if he could not find an example here, this was only a small selection. Most of Martial was too smutty for the use of schools. Instead of concentrating on Askew's arch epigram John began to concentrate on an English epigram to be entitled *On Castrat-*

ing *Martial for the Use of Schools*, the last two lines of which might be:

*And since the deed that wanton witty Roman
May be a poet but, alas, is no man.*

Or perhaps more neatly but less quotably:

*Cupid could not be martial without arrows,
And Martial can't be Cupid without ****s.*

John scribbled lines and bits of lines for an hour until he was reminded by the first notes of the *Poet and Peasant* overture from the German band which visited Church Row every Saturday morning at this hour that it was already ten o'clock. He heard his father come in to breakfast and, tearing up the notes for an English epigram, set out to hammer Askew's puking lines into elegiacs. An hour later when he had battered out the first two clumsy couplets his father came down from the library and put his head round the door.

"Are you working?"

"Yes, I'm trying to get a set of verses done."

"I was thinking I'd take a quick walk on the Heath before lunch. Would you care to come with me?"

John jumped up with every appearance of enthusiasm for the project. He was thinking that now he ought to be able to get the rest of the day to himself without offending his father. He could finish the verses tomorrow afternoon and do the essay in the evening—and if he did not bicycle to school on Monday morning he could do the rest of his stuff in the train.

"I didn't mean to put you off coming to the match this afternoon," he explained to his father. "But it really

won't be a good show, and I'll have to start by a quarter-past one, which would be rotten for you."

The barrister was warmed by John's attitude that morning, and the walk passed off well, for he told John stories about some of the cases he had been in and felt gratified by the intelligent questions and observations the boy made upon them.

"I wonder if you'd mind awfully if I didn't get back to dinner again to-night?" John asked as they turned out of the High Street into Church Row at the end of the walk. "A fellow on the Mathematical side called Fenwick wants me to go to tea with him, and very often when one goes to tea like that one gets asked to stay on to supper."

"Well, I'm dining out myself. So that will give the servants an evening off. But don't get back too late."

"You don't mind if I'm in by twelve?"

"No, that'll be all right."

Rummy chaps, fathers. All that fuss about last night, and now as mild as you like. Things were going well to-day.

Things did not go so well when John took the field with the rest of the Second Fifteen and sought anxiously among the sprinkling of spectators along the ropes for a glimpse of Connie. There was not a sign of her. This preoccupied him so much that when the Bart's centre-forward kicked off and sent the ball spinning toward him he failed to gather it properly and the ensuing rush by the hospital forwards ended in a try against the School.

"Good god almighty, Ogilvie," growled the Captain in the line up. "Haven't you had your afternoon nap yet?"

"Sorry, Hopkinson. Something got in my eye."

'Something did not get in my eye' would have been more correct, John thought, and he could not help smiling to himself.

"It's nothing to grin about, you slack ass," Hopkinson snapped.

Just then the Bart's half set the ball down from the place kick, which went wide. Usually John was given the drop out from the twenty-five; but Hopkinson marked his displeasure by flinging the ball to one of the halves. Five minutes later, as Williams put the ball into a scrum half-way between the Bart's twenty-five and the centre of the field, John saw a dark-red coat walking across the stretch of green behind the Bart's goal. "Heel, School, heel! For the love of God, heel! Heel! Heel, School!" Williams was imploring in a voice of agonized entreaty. And the clumsy Second Fifteen pack managed to heel out cleanly. Williams swung the ball to Gallagher; Gallagher swung the ball along to John. John saw the dark-red coat behind the Bart's goal and shot through between the Bart's centre three-quarters. The Bart's full-back dived for his legs. John, his eyes fixed on the dark-red coat, leapt in the air like a stag to avoid the back's grip, and a moment later he touched down between the posts. As he walked away from the ball he threw one glance over his shoulder in the direction of Connie. He was hoping that she understood enough about rugger to grasp that he had scored a pretty decent try.

At half-time, while the reeking forwards were lying about sucking slices of lemon, John, who had scored another good try just before the whistle blew, now took the risk of being accused of side by walking over to the touch-line to greet Connie and Hetty and the noticeably

awed Rupert, who had not expected to be addressed by a member of the Second Fifteen for many long weary terms to come.

"I'll change as quickly as I can if you walk slowly on," he said as the whistle blew for the second half. "I'll catch you up before you're half-way down Baron's Court Road."

The match ended in a victory for the visitors; but John never cheered more heartily as the member of a defeated team.

"You played damned well, Judge," said Hopkinson as they were crossing the gravel to the changing-room. "But I thought you had the jim-jams when you started."

John had been optimistic in calculating that he could change fast enough to overtake the Fenwicks half-way along Baron's Court Road. For all his furious pedalling they were back home in Gladwyn Road when he saw them again. Hopkinson would have supposed that John had had another severe attack of the jim-jams if he had been present when Hetty, in answer to his restless glances toward the door of the dining-room, told him that Connie had had to go out to visit some friends after the match. A sick disappointment clutched his heart, and in the confusion of his mind he barely managed to avoid asking if she would be back for supper before he realized that he himself had not yet been invited to stay for supper and that he did not even know whether the Fenwicks had dinner or supper in the evening. Fortunately Mr Fenwick began to talk about Legitimists and the rapidly degenerating condition of Europe consequent upon tampering with the monarchical idea. In a few minutes John was sufficiently himself again to recognize

that he was eating exceptionally good strawberry jam and that he was hungry. Nevertheless he could not have succeeded in hiding his disappointment completely, because Hetty found an opportunity to take him aside after tea and tell him that Connie was really quite upset at missing him, but that she had forgotten about this previous engagement, which, as she was going to meet an actor who might be useful to her, had to be kept.

"When will she be back?"

"Oh, not till late. She's gone over to Richmond for the evening."

John felt as if the ceiling of the room was resting on his head.

"But next Saturday if you're free there's a meeting here for the supporters of father's throneless monarchs, to which he's going to invite you, and Connie thought we might go to Olympia afterwards to see Barnum's show if you are free."

"That would be ripping."

"Why don't you go up and have a talk with father? He took rather a fancy to you."

Mr Fenwick was to impress himself on John's mind and remain in his memory for years as the perfect type of romantic ineffectiveness, and when his own later development was to lead him to analyse early impressions and influences he was inclined to lay a greater responsibility on Mr Fenwick for the desertion by himself of his youthful beliefs than was merited. He would forget that before he met Connie's father his friend Fitzgerald's fanatical nationalism had already made his own Jacobitism appear as anæmic and as affectedly archaic as the women of Burne-Jones. Still, the incarnate warning that Mr

Fenwick offered of the results of dreaming about a lost cause without the slightest intention of taking any practical steps to give it a contemporary importance undoubtedly did affect John. As soon as he reached the stage of being irritated by the fatuity of merely ritual observances, like laying wreaths at the base of the equestrian statue of Charles I and drinking the health of Queen Mary IV across a finger-bowl of water, he flung away with the ritual the faith which produced it, because for him the substance of things hoped for had dissolved like a rose-dyed morning mist and the only evidence of things not seen was a sentiment that soon cloyed intolerably.

"You know, I grew to feel so strongly about Legitimism," Mr Fenwick told John this afternoon when he noticed him looking at a painting of himself as a very young man in the uniform of a yeomanry dragoon, "that I resigned my commission in the Cumberland Dragoons. Besides, I ask you," he went on, with a delicate gesture of his slim white hands, "a Cumberland Dragoon!"

It was not much to sacrifice for a cause, John thought even so early as that afternoon, and looking again at the uniformed figure he perceived the essential weakness which that heavy moustache all young men seemed able to grow once upon a time could not hide.

"We saw come marching o'er the knowes,
Five hundred Fenwicks in a flock—
With jack and speir, and bowes all bent,
And warlike weapons at their will,"

quoted this contemporary member of the brood called

fierce and fearless Fenwicks; and because he was Connie's father John tried to feel that the quotation was not embarrassing. Presently Mr Fenwick lifted the glass top of a table to take out a heart-shaped locket.

"The Prince's hair," he told his visitor as he opened it and showed a chestnut-brown lock which glinted in a sudden radiance of the setting sun. This relic brought a lump to John's throat. Criticism was for a while forgotten. "And here is a piece of embroidery worked by the Queen of Scots during her imprisonment. And here is a crucifix which belonged to young Kinlochmoidart. He gave it to an ancestor of mine who was able to do him some small service before he was martyred at Carlisle. And here is a coral that belonged to the White Rose Prince of Wales when he was a baby. But come along and sit down and have a smoke. These relics are too melancholy."

When Mr Fenwick pressed on John one of those mild cigars he had recommended, he felt bound to accept it. He could scarcely be criticizing to himself his host's weakness and then funk one of his cigars. To his relief he found he was able to smoke it without a hint of discomfort.

"I want you to come along next Saturday," his host was telling him. "We've got a meeting of the West London Legitimist League, and I'll propose you as a member. An American Episcopalian parson is going to read us a paper on the attitude of American Jacobites to the Revolution. It is usually stated by prejudiced historians that all emigrant Scots helped the Hanoverians, but it would appear that this was by no means true of all of them. There were many Jacobites who fought on the side of Independence. It has always been something

of a puzzle to the members of the Legitimist League to know what attitude the League should adopt towards the United States. Personally, I have always been in favour of recognition, because to rebel against rebels seems to me a logical impossibility. Many of the League members prefer to regard the United States as revolted colonies and refuse to acknowledge them as a sovereign state. Moreover, and this I admit is the great obstacle to recognition, many of our own members have such a horror of republicanism in any shape or form that they dread the effect of recognizing a republic. There is a great deal to be said for their attitude because we must remember that our belief in the divine right of monarchs is not merely a sentiment, it is also . . .” Mr Fenwick paused.

John leaned forward eagerly.

“It is also a philosophy; in fact I could practically call it an article of our religion.”

“Would you die for it?” the boy asked.

“Die for it? Why, I hope that if the opportunity were given to me I should be granted the courage,” Mr Fenwick replied. “But I’m afraid that in these degenerate days the opportunity will not be given. I have no illusions, Ogilvie. I do not suppose for an instant that there is the faintest hope of restoring the rightful line to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland.”

John was silent. He was thinking of Edward Fitzgerald’s face in the light of the lamp-post yesterday evening. He was wanting to ask Mr Fenwick what was the value of a profound conviction about something which had no relation to the world of to-day.

Mr Fenwick answered his unspoken question.

"I disregard the criticism levelled against us by the average man that we are not practical," he said. "I consider that we are preserving an attitude toward life which would otherwise be lost. So long as we guard and tend the flame, however dimly it may burn, it is still living fire. The world may yet require that flame for a great furnace. Republicanism may have seemed outworn when Brutus died. Imperialism may have seemed finished when Rome fell. Government in the future may show us political experiments undreamed of hitherto. Those experiments may succeed. It is equally probable that they will outlive their utility. We may have to retrace our steps. Moreover, the immortality of an idea is one of the assurances granted to humanity of the immortality of the soul. How old are you? Ah, yes, well, I'm just forty-three years older than you, and when you reach my age you'll find that death is your next-door neighbour, and an obtrusive one . . . yes, death, whom at present you can hardly fancy in the same world as yourself."

As Mr Fenwick spoke these last words he shook a long forefinger at his young guest, and John who was not usually macabre saw it for a moment as the fleshless finger of a skeleton.

"I suppose," Mr Fenwick continued meditatively, "that people of ancient family like myself are always more sharply aware of death. The consciousness of succession is never lulled to sleep. The man who scarcely knows who his grandfather was often has a kind of animal innocence about first and last things. That is why in these democratic days capital punishment is so ridiculous. How can the threat of death deter a man who lives from moment to moment? You mustn't misunder-

stand me when I cite the present fever of the mob to enlist for the South African War. Not one of these khaki warriors believes that *he* may be killed by a Boer bullet."

"I rather wanted to enlist myself," said John, who was anxious not to present himself to Connie's father in a false light.

"And why? For the sake of the adventure, eh?"

"Well, to get away from school really."

"That is only another way of saying the same thing. I don't blame you. School is a foretaste of the world modern man has created for himself. Yet how many of those who fought for the King against the Parliament, for the King against Cromwell, for the King against the Dutch usurper, for the King against the Hanoverian usurper, fought for the sake of escaping from the *taedium vitae* which is the inevitable accompaniment of material progress? You wouldn't enlist for South Africa because you believe that the Transvaal and the Orange Free State should be coloured red in the map of the world?"

"No, it's very odd. I don't think that most of the intelligent people of my age believe in the least that the British Empire is a good thing in itself. But I mustn't say that. Askew, my form-master, cursed me like anything for writing about 'things in themselves' in an essay. Still, you know what I mean. Yet they can't see anything better than the British Empire at the moment, and so they get into the habit of thinking that there must be something in it. Besides, it's too late to do anything about it. That's really what I feel. You see, every side I've cared about in history has lost. Cray, one of my form-masters, used to call me a minority man. I re-

member he once set me a piece of Greek prose about a sophist who argued that the majority must be wrong because most men are fools. He argued so well that when the vote was taken he had carried all his audience except one man, who at once pointed out that according to the sophist the minority must be right and that therefore the sophist's contention was wrong. . . ."

John suddenly noticed that Mr Fenwick was nodding. He jumped up in some confusion:

"I'm afraid I shall have to be going now, sir. I'm looking forward to Saturday."

"Yes, well, we'll make you a member of the League. At any rate, you won't find many majority men members, though I won't guarantee you against a complete absence of fools."

Mrs Fenwick came into the room as her husband was speaking.

"Why, hullo, sweetheart, there you are," he exclaimed, affection warming that coldly correct voice.

It did not occur to John in the state of his own emotion over Mrs Fenwick's younger daughter to be astonished at the regard in which the melancholy aristocrat so obviously held his plump common little wife. As Connie's mother he desired to find her perfect. Yet the explanation was easy enough. Aylmer Fenwick at forty had married the daughter of a roundabout proprietor whom he had met during a walking tour in the footsteps of the fugitive king Charles II. That her father was half a gipsy mattered nothing. She was twenty-two years younger than himself and she loved him. Like many a marriage of such disparity it was happy because the man had sacrificed his prejudices for love. Aylmer Fenwick

beheld Margaret Gandy as she was. It was only he who had seemed to grow old, and that she should love him now at sixty was still a marvel at which he never ceased to wonder. She let him put her right in small matters as sweetly now as when she was a shy girl in the strange surroundings of her married life, so unimaginable to a wanderer from fair to fair. It was true that Aylmer Fenwick's Legitimist creed never managed to rise above the level of eccentricity, that the expression of his beliefs appeared to consist of forms and ceremonies, and that his family regarded him as a lovable dreamer; but it was impossible to cross the threshold of that house in Gladwyn Road without recognizing that the rooms were larger merely because he moved about them. Therein lay for awhile his influence on John. If such a man could discover no practical expression for his uncompromising beliefs, how should anybody succeed?

It was about half-past seven when John reached Hampstead and decided to devote his evening to the essay set by Askew. There was a slight argument with the domestic staff about the unreasonableness of young gentlemen who announced they would be out to dinner and then came back expecting to find it obtainable at a moment's notice.

"You really are aggravating, Master John," said Watson, the elderly parlour-maid. "Your father particularly said me and Cook was to take the evening off if we would like it. Only as it happened I wasn't feeling

none too well, and so I let one of the girls go out instead."

"Well, it's all right, Watson. I only want some bread and cheese," John declared.

"Yes, I dare say, only want some bread and cheese; and Cook wouldn't have nothing to say about it, would she, if I was only to give you bread and cheese? Really, Master John, I say to myself sometimes that it's younger you're growing instead of older every day. Well, you'll just have to wait while I see what Janet and me can find. And me just settled down with the first chance I've had to look at my *Church Times*, since yesterday, and early service to-morrow morning and all, when I do like to spend a quiet peaceable evening."

"Look here, Watson, if you keep on jawing I'll go out and eat a fourpenny vanilla ice for supper."

"You'll do no such a thing, freezing your stomach in this starving east wind with vanillar ices. Whoever heard the likes?"

In spite of her grumbling Watson managed to give John some of his favourite dishes that evening.

"And which," she observed to Janet, the between-maid, "Cook takes a regular pleasure in not giving him for all me for ever telling her what he likes best."

John found the back dining-room uninspiring for the comparison he had to make of the treatment of love by the Roman poets with the treatment of it by the romantic poets of the nineteenth century. It might have seemed easier before he met Connie.

"Good lord, only just twenty-four hours ago!" he ejaculated.

Then he fell into a trance of regret for the disappoint-

ment of this evening, from which he rescued himself by going up to his own room at the top of the house and mooning out of the open window at the tawny glow of the London sky, beneath which Connie would be sleeping in another few hours. Damn this essay. And yet no. Why damn this essay? The subject was love. Thinking it over, he could not recall such a sensible subject from Askew. A damned sight more sensible than comparing the tactics of the Macedonian phalanx with the tactics of the Roman legion about his efforts to establish which Askew had tried to be funny last Tuesday morning. John lit the gas, and noted on a sheet of paper:

<i>Lesbia</i>	<i>Catullus</i>
<i>Cynthia</i>	<i>Propertius</i>
<i>Delia</i>	<i>Tibullus</i>
<i>Lalage</i>	<i>Horace</i>
<i>Lydia</i>	<i>Horace</i>
<i>Dido</i>	<i>Vergil</i>
<i>Ars Amatoria</i>	<i>Ovid</i>

The grossly cynical view of the tender passion(?) which the large-nosed Roman poet, who was exiled by the Emperor Octavius for a discreditable intrigue with his sister? sister-in-law? daughter? daughter-in-law? is repugnant to our modern taste. We cannot believe that Ovid knew what true love(?) or romantic love(?) or love(?) was. We remember his advice to the spectator at the games to drop his ticket(?) in order to have an excuse for bending down to catch a glimpse of the comely thigh of the lady sitting in front of him.

Perhaps Askew would object to that, better put

ankle, though Ovid wrote 'thigh' . . . and we compare that with Tennyson's exquisite picture of Maud's airy tread.

<i>Maud</i>	<i>Tennyson</i>
<i>Fanny Brawne</i>	<i>Keats</i>
<i>The Maid of Athens</i>	<i>Byron</i>

'By those wild eyes like the roe.' Damned good, that. 'By those lids whose jetty fringe kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge?' By gad, how damned good! One could fancy that Byron had been evoking Connie herself. 'She walks in beauty, like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies; and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes.' Absolutely Byron might have seen Connie.

When we compare the noble lines of the poet Byron in celebration of the most ideal type of womanhood with . . .

With what? It might be rash to start moral comparisons where Byron was concerned. Old Askew had probably read *Don Juan*, and would have something to say about Donna Julia. . . .

The essayist decided it was time to go down to the library and check his references. By the time his father came home at a quarter to one he had covered ten pages of foolscap with quotations from the poets and a number of those heavy pronouncements in the first person plural with which the schoolboys of a generation ago, in whom originality was not encouraged, were wont to release their conventional opinions with the solemnity of Papal bulls.

"I hope you don't mind my swotting in your library?" said John. "But I kept wanting books. I was writing my essay."

"Did you enjoy your evening?" his father asked.

"Well, as a matter of fact I made a mistake. It was next Saturday I was invited to supper. But Watson got me some grub. I've been working on this essay all the evening."

"What was the subject?"

"Love."

"These modern schoolmasters are a queer lot," observed the barrister. "What a subject for a schoolboy! You must have been able to make a very valuable contribution to the literature of the passions."

John felt embarrassed.

"It wasn't just love. It was a comparison between the treatment of love by the Latin poets and modern poets. We had the same kind of thing about scenery."

"I see. Just an excuse to trot out quotations."

"Yes."

"How did the match go?"

"We were beaten. They had rather a beefy lot of forwards. I got two tries."

"Good. I suppose you'll be in the First Fifteen next year?"

"I suppose I shall have a decent chance," John agreed without enthusiasm. He did not enjoy being reminded of what steppes of times still stretched between him and release from marching along those monotonous parasangs of school. He wondered what his father would say if he were to announce he had made up his mind to be an actor and wished to attend the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art. Have a fit probably. Suddenly there came over John a passionate desire for the company of Mrs Stern. Strengthened by the consciousness of being in

love with Connie, he did not care what people said about him and Stern. They could think what they liked. He had treated Stern rather rottenly. To-morrow afternoon he would call round and ask Stern to wait for him at the corner as usual on Monday morning.

John's self-reproach was not idle. Miriam Stern had been worried about Emil's state of utter dejection when he reached home after the debate. All her life she had been trying to administer balm to wounded minds. It had begun with her father who, having been a moderately successful portrait-painter in Warsaw, had begun to believe himself a Velasquez denied recognition because he was a Jew, and who when Miriam was fourteen had removed his family to England under the conviction that a country with a Jewish Prime Minister would accord him the honour, the fame, and the material prosperity Poland refused him. In England the painter had found no suggestion of persecution; but what was worse a blank bourgeois indifference which wounded him more deeply. Miriam Stern could shudder still at the memory of those black fogs of twenty years ago, when the air was creeping like a hooded death into the half-furnished Notting Hill house, and when her mother would send her up the echoing uncarpeted stairs to light the gas for her father in the studio if he *must* banish himself from the only warm room in the house, which was the kitchen in the basement. Miriam would find him sitting with bowed head on the sitters' chair which sitters so seldom occupied. She would see the windows like blind eyes, and beyond them the dim fulvous oblongs of gaslight in the backs of the houses opposite, across which the shadows of human beings, incredibly alive, made phantom gestures. One

day, out of sheer despair to find a word of hope for this bowed figure of hopelessness, she had sung to him an old folk-song of Central Europe, and when he had gathered her to him in the silence that succeeded she had supposed that this singing to him in the foggy twilight was a sure consolation; but once on a dark November afternoon, coming upstairs like that to minister to his gloom, she had found the canvas on which he was working slashed to ribbons and beneath the dust-sheet with which he was wont to cover it the dead body of the painter, his throat slashed too.

And then there had been her brother Jan the revolutionary, for ever holding forth about the wrongs of the poor and downtrodden, and requiring from his sister the ceaseless tribute of sympathetic attention. The end of Jan had been Siberia, escape, and death from starvation and exposure.

And then there had been Ernest her husband, with enough music in him to make him despise his father's business, with enough music in him to make him dream of being for Jewry what Mendelssohn had failed to be, with enough music in him to play the second violin in the Philharmonic, but no more music than that. He had not lived even long enough to enjoy the brief triumph of his son Julius, merely long enough to reproach his wife for transferring to the children all the devoted love she had once felt for him, and to them all the passionate belief she had once held in his genius.

And then there was poor little Julius, suddenly deprived by the doctors of the feverish concert-platform life which was the only reality in his childish existence. She had had to console him first for the imagined coldness of

audiences, and she must try to console him now by being his only audience when sometimes, his great eyes burning, his eyebrows meeting in a tragic scowl, he would play one of those Bach Partitas, for the performance of which he had been extolled as high as the angels. Even during his brief career Julius had earned enough money for his family to live in comfort and indulge in the unobtrusive beauty by which his mother set such store. Julius was like a forsaken bride who will not doff her bridal gown, for he insisted always upon dressing himself as if he were going to play in public. His mother often wondered whether it would not be kinder to let him play out his life on the concert-platform instead of keeping him miserable on the chance of returning health. She was not a woman who feared the world's opinion in most things; but she did shrink from exposing herself to the accusation that she had sacrificed her prodigy of a son for personal gain.

Now here was Emil, whose debonair indifference to the world had been such a joyful relief, falling into dejection like the others.

"My dearest boy, what has happened to you?"

And when he told her about Ogilvie and Fitzgerald and the speech he made and the loneliness he felt for the first time her maternal pride rejoiced in the security of the confidence that came from her son's frankness.

"I don't believe Ogilvie meant to hurt your feelings, beloved Emil."

"Oh, yes, he did. He meant to show me that I was a Jew, and that I was not to forget it."

Miriam Stern heard again her father's voice in that bitter complaint.

"Indeed, Emil, I think till you are more perfectly sure there has not been some foolish misunderstanding you ought to give Ogilvie the credit of being superior to that kind of attitude. You will see that I am right."

"You don't know what these idiotic boys at an English public school are like," he exclaimed contemptuously. "Silly ignorant little bourgeois with the minds of savages!"

"Why don't you ask Ogilvie to tea with you on Sunday? We could send a note by Ethel if you don't want to go to his house."

"I'd sooner die!" Emil declared, cheeks and lips white.

This conversation had taken place on Friday evening. On Sunday afternoon when Emil still in a mood of profound dejection was sitting by the fire in the grey room with the sea-green velvet curtains, his mother had come in, looking so young and merry, to say that Ogilvie was taking off his coat down in the hall.

"You asked him to come," he accused her, tremulous with anger.

"No, no, Emil love, he came entirely of his own accord."

It may have been John's preoccupation with the fancy of the girl with whom he had fallen in love since he had last seen Mrs Stern which transmitted itself in emotion to her mind, for with an inward frown at herself Miriam Stern beheld her son's friend no longer as a schoolboy when he came into her grey drawing-room this afternoon, smiling that sidelong smile in shyness, nutbrown hair ruffled, eyes questioning, cheeks flushed like a girl's from hurrying through the wind. She clutched at the corsage of her dress of black chiffon-velvet as if she would pluck from her heart that which had set it suddenly

beating; and as she made the gesture she looked quickly round at Emil to discover if he was aware that his mother was not much more proof than other women against the supposed folly of womanhood. Emil, however, thought she looked at him to urge his own folly.

"Let's go down to my room," he said to Ogilvie.

"It will be tea-time in half an hour," Mrs Stern reminded the boys, putting into her voice so much prim maternal pedagogy in an effort to set John Ogilvie back where he had been until this afternoon that John himself asked Emil in dismay, as they went downstairs to Emil's little room at the back of the house, whether he had done anything to annoy his mother.

"She isn't annoyed with you. But I think she thought you and I had quarrelled."

Emil bit his lips in a rage with himself for using so feminine a word. He deserved now whatever cold piece of sarcasm he got from Ogilvie. John, however, during the last two days had become a good deal less sensitive to emotional turns of speech from others. To Emil's astonishment and exultation he felt his arm gripped.

"I'm sorry I treated you rather rottenly, but somebody said something about you and me which bored me. . . ."

"Fitzgerald!" exclaimed the younger boy.

"No, no, he said nothing . . . oh, that's why you were so ikey to him at the debate!"

"Ikey!" repeated Emil bitterly. "Why not Ikey Moses?"

"No, that wasn't the best word to use in the circumstances," John laughed. "Never mind, Emil, you know I wasn't trying to be objectionable."

It was the first time Ogilvie had called him by his

first name. In that moment the unhappiness of the misunderstanding was forgotten.

"I thought Fitzgerald had said something about your going round so much with a Jew."

John shook his head.

"He said nothing. But he's rather fed up with you now after that speech."

They had already reached Emil's little room and were sitting on either side of the gasfire. Above the mantelpiece hung a small painting by Emil's grandfather. Four men in black cloaks were sitting with heads close together at a table, reading some document by the light of a candle. A young woman who was coming toward them with a tray of food had paused to listen anxiously by the door, and an old woman in the background was blowing up the fire with a pair of bellows. *Poland 1863*, read the legend on the frame. That had been the year of the last insurrection against the Russian tyranny.

"My grandfather was a Jew," Emil explained, "but he was none the less in sympathy with Polish freedom for all that. Yet he had to leave the country because as a Jew he stood no chance of fair treatment. So I always get exasperated when these Irish and Polish patriots talk as if they were the only nations that knew what it was to be under the yoke of a conqueror. As a matter of fact I voted against my own speech, because I believe that imperialism is more dangerous to the world than nationalism. We might reach internationalism if once national aspirations were satisfied, but imperialism can only mean war, and war on a grand scale, too."

"You know, it's queer to listen to you and Fitzgerald," observed John. "Here we are all three of us at school

with a crowd of people whose lives will never be more exciting than they are at present, and to hear you both talk you would think that they were seething with revolution."

"But can't you realize that the world must blow up fairly soon? You surely don't think that this weary dreary end of an epoch is going to drag on for ever? Wait till Victoria and Franz Josef die, and after them will come the deluge."

"They might live to a hundred," John suggested.

"Even if they do, this state of mind can't go on."

"But it is a deadly dull time in history," John insisted. "There's something pathetic about the way people have worked themselves up over this war in South Africa. Why, I was wanting to enlist in the Imperial Yeomanry until . . ." he stopped himself. Emil had a way of getting more out of you than you meant to say, and with all his brains he was too much of a kid to understand about falling in love with a girl like Connie.

"Until what?" Emil pressed.

"Oh, until I got disgusted by all this tin-trumpet patriotism. Put a penny in my tambourine for a gentleman in khaki going south! My god, it's the assumed jolly-good-fellow attitude which I hate. We'll call the poor — a gentleman, and that'll buck him up no end. Do you suppose that a fellow like Kipling really believes all this rot he writes about the Empire?"

"Doesn't a kid banging on a drum believe he's a real soldier?" the younger boy asked.

"I say, Emil," John went on, "it must sometimes make you laugh when you see the way the English have appropriated militant Judaism, lock, stock and barrel. I

wonder they haven't invented a Maccabees tartan. All this God of our fathers business in Kipling, and a sort of mock-modest attitude over being the Chosen People. I suppose it was that filthy swine Cromwell who started it. You may laugh at the Irish, but they *are* men of the West. Not pseudo-Orientals like the English and the Germans. I wish you and Fitzgerald could get on. I'd like to hear you argue with him."

"I could as soon argue with a gorilla," declared Emil. "He's not civilized. At any rate, the English are civilized."

"Yes, you think that because they've absorbed so much of the Jewish point of view," said John. "Disraeli is the Moses of modern England."

"Disraeli!" Emil scoffed. "Why not Lyons, or Salmon and Gluckstein?"

The discussion was closed by Mrs Stern calling the boys to tea, and after tea Julius played the Bach Partita in D minor that has the famous chaconne, weaving what John thought the most incomprehensible pattern of sound to which he had ever listened. Yet there sat the brother and mother of the player lost to everything except his music. What a barrier music raised between those who appreciated it and those who did not! How could one draw near to people who were able to seclude themselves instantly in this impenetrable thicket of sound? John tried to escape from the prickly maze of notes into the dream world where Connie could be conjured up immediately; but the insistency of the violin distracted him. Twang! Twang! How was it possible to enjoy this relentless tangle of sound? But they were enjoying it. Emil's mouth looked as if he were kissing invisible

celestial beings. And Mrs Stern's eyes were beholding visions of beauty to him incommunicable.

"I must look to these people like a cold dumpling on a plate," John thought.

Presently Mrs Stern turned to see how he was enjoying the Partita, and when she cast upon him her dark eyes a brightness rimmed them like moonlight round the edge of a cloud. John was seized with a surprising desire to sit on a footstool at her feet and lay his head in her lap. It was seeming to him that to rest his cheek upon that black velvet dress would be the very perfection of repose. The first impression he had had of her in this room came back to him. Why after all had he been drawn here this afternoon? Was it not to escape from the coldness of his father's house? If his mother had lived he might not have felt lost in music like this. He could remember the way he used to love sitting on a footstool, with his ear to the vibrating leg of the piano while his mother played—what? Which of those pieces of music that still stood piled upon one another in the piano-stool, her name written finely in fading ink upon every one of them? Always Athene Pendarves . . . never Athene Ogilvie. After she married she must have bought no more music. No doubt his father had been as hopelessly lost in the tangle of her notes as he himself was now in this pattern woven by Julius Stern. Mrs Stern was smiling as if to tell him that she knew his thoughts, and to smile back at her was like the acknowledgment of a secret between them. Never again would he behave so rottenly to Emil. It was time to free himself from the absurd tyranny of public-school behaviour. What on earth did it matter what his fellows thought? They were herrings in a shoal with but

one ambition among them, and that was to conform to the shoal's standard.

Julius had stopped. He was now sitting huddled on a footstool in a far corner of the room, to frown over mistakes he thought he had made. An uncanny sort of kid.

"What were you thinking about, John?" Mrs Stern asked.

"I was thinking I wished I didn't feel such a frightful dolt when good music was being played."

"But you looked as if you were walking in a magic garden," she assured him.

"Did I? Well, I was thinking of when my mother was alive. She used to play a lot. I was looking at her music the other day, and most of it was by Schumann."

"He once had the impudence to write a piano accompaniment for the Partita I played," said Julius sternly. "And he couldn't write for the violin at all."

"But John's mother probably did not play the violin, and Schumann wrote most beautifully for the piano, Julius. I expect she used to play the *Kinderscenen* for him."

Mrs Stern went across to the piano and played a short piece in which John was extremely gratified to find that he could detect something like the suggestion of a tune.

"That's *Traümerei*," Mrs Stern told him. "It's supposed to be a little child dreaming by the fireside."

Julius jumped up, and played the melody over again on his violin, with the astonishing effect on John of making him feel on the verge of bursting into tears.

"Why, John, you are much more susceptible to music

than you pretend. You will have to come with us the next time we go to the Queen's Hall."

"I should love to, Mrs Stern."

Presently Emil was asking him if he had done the essay for to-morrow, and was evidently anxious that John should retire with him to his room to read his own contribution.

"And you'll stay on to supper with us?" Mrs Stern asked.

John would have been overjoyed to accept this invitation, but he was afraid of a fuss with his father which might end in his not getting next Saturday evening, and told her that he was expected home.

"There's my essay," said Emil, pushing the sheets of foolscap across to his friend and watching him while he read it.

"But, I say, Emil, you can't hand this in," John expostulated when he had finished. "You simply can't, my dear chap. You'll shock Askew into fits."

"He asked for a comparison. I've given him one."

"Yes, but . . . but you can't write these things down in a school essay."

"He asked for a comparison," Emil repeated obstinately. "The only comparison worth making is between the love that was recognized by the Romans and the love that is recognized by the poets of the nineteenth century. The best love poetry in Latin is about boys, except of course for Propertius and the *Pervigilium Veneris* and one or two poems of Catullus. Horace is conventional about his plump ladies. So really is Tibullus about his Delia. But when he is writing about boys he writes poetry. 'O fuge te tenerae puerorum credere turbae,' that is written from the heart. And so is, 'Eheu quam

Marathus lento me torquet amore!" Even Virgil never evokes the beat of physical desire unless he is writing about boys."

"But you can't say so in a school essay," John insisted.

"I should have thought that was the most appropriate medium to choose," said Emil. "*Formosum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexim* is a living line even at St James's. What does *Come into the garden, Maud*, mean for schoolboys except a skivvy's giggle?"

"There are other lines than that to quote," argued John. "*Rose Aylmer, whom these watchful eyes may weep, but never see. A night of memories and sighs I consecrate to thee.*"

Emil laughed.

"To some boy perhaps, but not to Rose Aylmer."

"As a matter of fact," said John severely, "I fell madly in love with a girl on Friday night."

Emil turned pale.

"With a girl? What girl?"

"A girl I met."

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"That won't last very long. Girls of eighteen don't fall madly in love with youths of seventeen."

"Then according to you I ought to be falling in love with some damned kid in the Lower Third?"

"I didn't say that; but it wouldn't be as ridiculous as falling in love with a girl of eighteen."

"Look here, Emil, I'm very fond of you, but if you're going to sneer . . ."

"I'm not sneering," said the younger boy quickly.

"You see, you don't understand the effect you have."

"It must be something damned unpleasant to judge by my effect on you."

"It's not, it's not!" cried Emil passionately. "But don't let's talk about it any more, because I don't want you to feel I'm a kind of responsibility. I'm sorry I seemed to sneer about this girl. It's really because I should hate her to hurt you. Look here, to show I'm sorry . . ." he tore up the foolscap sheets on which the essay was written and threw them into the paper-basket. "I'll sit down after supper and write a good little schoolboy's essay without a hint of reality in it."

"Look here, I don't think you ought to work yourself up like this," John remonstrated.

"But you've been consecrating nights of memories and sighs to this . . . to your ladylove."

"You're younger than I am."

"I won't make the obvious retort."

"Look at yourself. In Etons!" John exclaimed, shocked by the tension of the emotional atmosphere. "You look even more of a kid than you are. In fact if you want to know why I was dodging you rather last week, it was because some of the chaps suggested that you and I were having an affair."

"What a ghastly suggestion!"

"It had never struck me that people *could* think that."

"Yes, mixed marriages *are* revolting," Emil assented bitterly. "But you didn't mind being ragged about young Ford last year. A silly little pussy-eyed nonentity with cheeks like wax apples."

"But you didn't know me then," John declared in astonishment.

"I knew you . . . oh, not to speak to, but to look at and admire from a distance."

"Well, I should mind being ragged about Ford now," John decided. "I've chucked that kind of thing completely. So don't always go on digging in this business about being a Jew. As a matter of fact, if you want to know, I get more pleasure out of being with you than with anybody at the school."

"Is that true?"

"If it weren't true do you think I would sit here and listen to the tosh you've been talking this afternoon? But I must go now."

After John was on his way back to Church Row Emil went in search of his mother. He found her turning over a photograph album of pictures in continental galleries. When he asked her what she was looking for she told him she was trying to find the figure that resembled his friend.

"He reminds me of some picture, but I cannot recall which."

"Well, I always think his smile is like that Leonardo in the Louvre."

"No, not really. It's another picture."

"He's always elusive," said Emil. "Did you notice his eyes when Julius was playing that old tune of Schumann's? He has just told me he's in love with a girl."

"Poor John. Our seventeen-year-old loves are not usually happy loves."

"I think perhaps he would tell you about her," said Emil, who could not resist torturing himself. "Try to make him, will you, mother?"

"Why, I believe you're in love with him yourself . . . yourself," she repeated in a remote voice, catching a

shadowy glimpse of her own dark grace as she moved across the round mirror set in ebony above the mantelpiece.

"I know I am," her son avowed.

"Emil, Emil, why does everybody in our family cry for the moon?"

Next day Emil and John were back in class, and the dull round of school was once more slowly revolving, so slowly for John in fact that by the time Saturday came he felt a year older. However, apart from an attempt by Abercrombie, the Captain of the Fifteen, to make him reconsider the scratching of his name from the list of those playing for the Second Fifteen on the ground that such scratching was a piece of disloyalty to the School, nothing jeopardized John's plans for Saturday.

It was a disappointment when he reached the Fenwicks' house sharp at three o'clock to hear that Connie had no intention of listening to the American parson read his paper on the attitude of Scots Jacobites in America toward the Restoration.

"No, thank you," she said. "I'll see quite enough freaks at Olympia to-night."

John took a deep draught from her eyes, which was as fortifying as and much more exhilarating than a glass of dark brown sherry, and found a corner in the drawing-room whence he could inconspicuously watch the gathering of the members of the West London Legitimist League, most of whom were more unlike John's con-

ception of Jacobites than even the most virulent Whig caricature could have depicted them.

To the majority of the young men present there clung an air rather of thwarted femininity than of thwarted political hopes. Nothing could have been less like the grave and gallant heroes of Jacobite romance than these wriggling giggling epicenes, most of whom were wearing high double-breasted waistcoats buttoning in a V, the mark at this date of a vaulting fashion which had overleapt itself. These young men made swans' necks of their arms while they chattered to one another in the too utterly utter style which was introduced in the early 'eighties and has survived to the present day with merely occasional changes in the laudatory adjective to mark the passing vogue. In distinction from the elegance of the young men most of the women present looked as if they had been dragged through a couple of hedges before they reached Gladwyn Road. Indeed, some of the older ones looked as if they had been dragged through the Maze at Hampton Court as well. The most prominent figure in the room was a burly middle-aged man wearing a belted plaid and enough jewellery and arms to fill a show-case in the South Kensington Museum. It was a pity while he was about it that he did not wear a wig of the same period as his costume, for the top of his bald head gleamed with as much lustre as the cairngorm in his shoulder-brooch. This ponderous anachronism presently had to share his post as a cynosure with another elderly man wearing the saffron kilt of Ireland, a saffron plaid, a green doublet, and a variety of neo-Celtic brooches and pins, one of which came undone and penetrated the backside of a gaunt old dame who had plunged down beside him at the beginning of the Ameri-

can parson's paper. The effect of the O'Dash's saffron kilt was slightly marred by the extremely pronounced paunch of the O'Dash himself which gave it an uncomely hitch-up in front to reveal when the O'Dash was seated that those chubby legs as smooth as pork ended in a pair of saffron drawers.

"My dear," John heard one elegant young epicene titter to a friend, "I'm sure the O'Dash is in the family way!"

"Oh, my dear, of course, the Royal Family way!"

The paper by the American parson was not of great interest, and when it was read John wondered if he might not escape downstairs to simpler surroundings. However, Mr Fenwick brought him out of his corner in order to introduce him to the Marquis of Ruvignal.

"Who as I expect you know," said Mr Fenwick, "is the greatest genealogist we have."

The Marquis of Ruvignal proved to be a spare little man wearing an overlong frock-coat, a black satin tie, and white spats, though spats at this date were as *démodé* as the frock-coat was presently to become. The Marquis peered at John through a pair of gold pince-nez, but when John had been talking to him for a while he became so much impressed by the extent of his erudition that he forgot the discrepancy between the grandeur of the Marquis's name and the dowdiness of his appearance in the pleasure of listening to an expert. He was cheered, too, by the Marquis's condemnation of many of the present company as *poseurs*, and of some even as positive frauds.

"But if you study the history of legitimism," the little man went on, "you'll find it threatened at every stage by the insincerity and untrustworthiness of many of its most

prominent adherents. On the other hand, the baseness of some has always been compensated for by the nobility of others. The greater the cause the meaner will appear so many of its supporters, and in any cause which depends to the extent of ours on a personal devotion that very devotion is going to be the reason of jealousy than which there is no more powerful temptation to disloyalty. To cite an example from the greatest cause the world has known, the cause of our Blessed Lord, you can find in jealousy the explanation of the treachery of Judas."

"But do you think that Jacobitism can ever again become a vital issue?" John asked.

"Jacobitism? No," the Marquis replied without hesitation. "But Carlism is not yet dead in Spain. And even Bourbonism is not yet dead in Naples. A restoration in France is still a possibility. But Jacobitism, if by Jacobitism you mean the restoration of the present Queen of Bavaria to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland, Jacobitism is dead. There are at the present moment over seven hundred people with more right to the throne than Victoria, but there is not a practical claimant among the lot. Indeed, I am quite sure that the large majority of them are unaware that they have any claim at all. Moreover, the present dynasty of the country is essentially popular. In fact it is an emanation of the middle-class ideals by which the material greatness of England and part of Scotland has been built up. Whatever may be the political developments of the coming century that dynasty will instinctively adapt itself to them. You may say that when the crown was offered to the Elector of Hanover he accepted it as a hireling monarch; but remember he was hired to reign not to rule, and none of

his successors has ever been allowed to forget it. The hostility of Ireland to the reigning family is really directed against them as a perfect emanation of Great Britain. The support that Ireland gave the Stuarts was based not on any particular affection for the Stuarts, but on the fact that England did not want the Stuarts, to which was added the Catholic bias."

"Do you think a legitimist claimant would have a chance of being recognized by the Irish?"

The Marquis shook his head.

"Ireland has passed far beyond legitimism. Ireland will aim at a republic for the government of a free Ireland. If Ireland wants a king there are descendents of Brian Boru at thirteen for twelve all over the country. That spherical gentleman in the saffron kilt is one of them."

At this moment the O'Dash rose to ask if Miss Macdonald-Smith could not be prevailed upon to sing some of the old Jacobite airs to her own accompaniment on the clarsach. There seemed to be no difficulty whatever in prevailing upon Miss Macdonald-Smith, and two of the elegant young men went tittering off downstairs to fetch up the instrument, which one of them could have carried quite easily by himself, for it turned out to be a small harp. Miss Macdonald-Smith, who was nearly as thin as one of her own harp-strings and had a mop of fair hair stuck all over with neo-Celtic combs, which gave it something of the appearance of the inside of an untidy work-basket, seated herself on a footstool. She twanged a few preliminary chords before demanding, with what John considered an abominably affected sigh, what she should sing. Everybody seemed to suggest a

different song, and Miss Macdonald-Smith, after sighing deeply again, murmured:

"Oh dear, it's all very difficult, isn't it?"

"If I were a spider," John whispered to the Marquis, with whom by this time he felt much at ease, "I'd sit down beside her and frighten Miss Muffet away."

"I'd bite her first," said the Marquis fiercely.

"Very difficult," Miss Macdonald-Smith sighed again. "Shall I sing *Came ye by Atholl?*"

There was an affirmative chorus, whereupon Miss Macdonald-Smith struck such a resounding chord that two of the strings snapped like a couple of Chinese crackers exploding.

"The first shots of the campaign," murmured the Marquis.

"Oh dear, I am so sorry," Miss Macdonald-Smith dithered. "Never mind, I can manage, I think." Whereupon she sang *Came ye by Atholl?* in a sad little rustle of a voice.

"A great song, Marquis," observed the gentleman in the belted plaid when Miss Macdonald-Smith had twanged her final note.

The Marquis, adjusting his pince-nez, nodded curtly.

Miss Macdonald-Smith was pressed to sing again; but early on in *Bonnie Charlie's now awa'* three strings snapped in quick succession, and deserting her clarsach she fled from the footstool, leaving the centre of the room to an immense woman called Miss Worthington who in a foghorn contralto sang *Will ye no' come back again?*

"If he doesn't hear that," said the Marquis drily, "we may safely assume that he never will come back now."

Miss Worthington went on with *Over the sea to Skye*,

her voice rising to a full gale, and she might have continued for the rest of the afternoon if she had not been driven from the centre of the room by another woman who with the help of three Ganymedes was carrying what looked like a battering-ram. This was a Mrs Herbert Bindon who dressed in a green waistless gown and wearing a wreath of tinsel bays was about to recite to the accompaniment of the large Irish harp, which was laid horizontally on the table like a huge zither.

Ping! Peng! Pang! Pong! Pung!

Mrs Bindon went undulating along the side of her prostrate harp to strike five solemn notes of deepening profundity, and then came undulating back again, chanting in a lugubrious monotone:

"I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree."

Pung! Pong! Pang! Peng! Ping!

"And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made."

Ping! Peng! Pang!

It was more than John could stand. Regardless of what his host might think of him, he fled from the room, barely managing to hold in his laughter till the door was closed behind him.

"What are you laughing at?" exclaimed Hetty, who was coming out of the dining-room.

"That female in green," he gasped. "Ping! Pong! Pung!"

"Mrs Bindon?"

John nodded, and began to laugh again. Hetty pulled him into the dining-room, where he and Hetty and Connie and Rupert and Mrs Fenwick all laughed together.

"She looked as if she were stalking the Marquis,"

John gurgled. "And when she reached 'Pung!' he said to me under his breath, 'Good God, I believe she's going to spring at me.' That's what started me laughing. I say, I hope Mr Fenwick won't be awfully bored by my behaviour; but I simply couldn't stop."

The girls assured him that their father was used to the effect of Mrs Bindon's recitation. They too had fled from it in unmanageable mirth.

It looked as if Mrs Bindon had broken up the gathering, for a few minutes later voices in the hall proclaimed that the members of the West London Legitimist League were homing.

"Well, how did you enjoy it?" the host enquired of John when the house was empty of conspirators.

"I liked the Marquis very much."

"A genuine scholar," Mr Fenwick testified. "And what is more a shrewd practical man. The Ruvignals have been living in this country since the French Revolution, and though the present Marquis is deep in every Royalist project he is more of a Englishman than a Frenchman."

"I didn't care for Mrs Bindon," John ventured.

"A preposterous woman," Mr Fenwick declared, and John was able to feel undisgraced by his flight from Mrs Bindon.

Neither of the older Fenwicks felt inclined for Olympia. So the party consisted of the two girls, Rupert, and John. John found Rupert a pleasant and sensible youth, a judgment he founded upon Rupert's readiness to stick to Hetty and leave Connie to himself.

Before going in to watch the circus they visited the Freaks. When they had stared in turn at the Bearded

Lady, the Skeleton Man, the Circassian Giant, the Midgets, Jo-jo the Dog-faced Man from Siberia, and an Oriental with the body of a little girl growing out of his middle and perfect except for the lack of a head, John began to feel queasy. Yet why should physical freaks make one feel queasy, whereas mental freaks like some of those people this afternoon were merely funny or irritating? Logically they ought to make one feel just as queasy as these unfortunate creatures exhibiting their deformities and abnormalities to sightseers. Moreover, one attribute they did possess in common, and that was vanity. That wretched creature with the child growing out of him had looked viperish when he fancied that the gaping crowds were paying more attention to his neighbour Jo-Jo than himself. And when the Bearded Lady in her white satin *décolleté* had gathered more spectators round her than the Skeleton Man in the next division, he began to pirouette and prance and attitudinize like a half-witted girl to draw the public gaze back to himself. It had been the same this afternoon. Everybody competing to be a cynosure.

"I don't think I should like to be a freak," Rupert observed pensively.

"But you are a freak," his sisters exclaimed simultaneously.

"I'm not, am I, Ogilvie? Anyway, I don't look like a nigger," he retorted to his sisters, who at once began to tickle his ribs, making him leap back and land on the toe of a solemn countrywoman who was gazing at the midgets as if they were piglings in a sty.

"I say, I beg your pardon, ma'am," Rupert gulped.

"If it had been my other foot, young man, I might of

said summat," declared the solemn countrywoman with an admonitory nod. Then she transferred from the right cheek to the left the bull's-eye she was sucking and resumed her contemplation of the midgets.

"You are asses," Rupert told his sisters.

"You ought to know. You're our brother," said Hetty.

"Worse luck," added Connie.

After these flashing sallies they left the Freaks, and took their seats for the circus.

The great moment of the performance was a female acrobat's dive from the highest point of the glass dome into the net above the tanned ring; but it was a greater moment for John than for anybody else in the audience, because as the gleaming figure shot through the air Connie caught his hand in nervous apprehension and when the female acrobat went plunging gracefully across the net to stand at the top of the ladder and take her ovation Connie left her hand in his. And on the way to Gladwyn Road, a walk of twenty minutes through the cold but clear March night, she let him draw her back from the other two and seemed to be wanting to linger with him on this pavement starry with flecks of mica under the starry sky.

"Let me kiss you, Connie?"

"No, no; Hetty and Rupert are just in front."

"You would let me kiss you if they weren't?" he pressed.

"Who knows?"

But when he looked into her eyes by the light of the lamp-post they were passing, he read 'yes'.

"Well, anyway, you can take your glove off."

"Why should I take my glove off on a cold night like this?"

In spite of the question she let him hold her wrist with the hand that was through her arm and with his other hand drew the glove from her fingers, thrilling to the smoothness of her nails as he tugged at the tips of them.

For a while they walked without words.

"What are you thinking, John?" she asked at last.

"I was thinking that perhaps if you came down to see me out as you did last week I would kiss you," he told her.

"Oh, that's what you were thinking?"

The inside of the Fenwicks' house seemed warm and scented as Arabia after the coldness of the outside air. John was delighted to hear Rupert ordered off to bed at once. Here was the dangerous member of the family to that farewell out of the way. John felt sure he could count on Hetty's sympathetic aid.

"Well, I've had a glorious time, Mrs Fenwick. I think I must be going. Do you mind if I bring my bicycle lamp into the hall to light it?"

"Connie will help you light it," said Hetty.

For a moment John feared that Connie was going to tease him by holding back. Then he was alone in the hall with her, the voices of the rest murmurous behind a closed door.

"I'll get the lamp," said a voice which did not belong to himself. The lamp was set down on the hall-table. The lamp was lighted. Rather than move an inch away from her he put the glowing match into his pocket and caught her to him. One slow kiss . . . but when he would have kissed her again a finger was at her lips. The voices were still safely murmurous. What need for alarm? She opened the front-door.

"Another kiss! Connie, you must!"

She leant forward and kissed him lightly on the mouth. The door closed. When John found his senses he was riding very fast, or rather he was once again not riding but floating on his bicycle while unlighted houses and shuttered shops streamed past him on either side.

Emil Stern's condemnation of the passion on which his friend was launched as unsuitable to the world of school looked like being justified. It was all very well for John to remind himself that the course of true love never did run smooth. When Shakespeare wrote that, he was thinking of strife between Capulets and Montagues, not of such contemptible obstacles to love as a school-boy's end of the term examinations. Shakespeare's opinion of schoolboys was in that seven ages of man speech in *As You Like It*. 'The whining schoolboy with his satchel, and shining morning face, creeping like snail unwillingly to school.' Devastating, absolutely devastating!

However, a week before the production of *As You Like It* by the Florence Harding School of Dramatic Art a more serious obstacle to the course of love than the humiliating restrictions of pupillage presented itself in the person of Mr Arthur Dancaaster, whose help (he was at present resting according to his card in the cheapest column of *The Stage*) Miss Harding had invited to play Touchstone, a part she had no male pupil competent to take.

John met Arthur Dancaaster first at the Fitzgeralds'

house, where Ellen Fitzgerald had invited him to give herself and Connie Fenwick some special coaching which would have been impossible under the eye of Miss Harding.

"It looks as if the young barnstormer in the size-twelve yellow button-boots were beginning to take more than a professional interest in the way Connie Fenwick manages her hands," Edward Fitzgerald observed to John with a chuckle. "He's had hold of one of her paws now for about five minutes."

John had been trying to drive from his mind this very thought that Fitz had sardonically put into words.

"Rot," he snapped angrily. "He's simply giving her some useful tips."

"He's giving the lady more than tips, but we must remember, 'No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets, but as truly loves on to the close,'" Fitz hummed. "But I wouldn't be too sure that her raven hair deserves it, Judge. Begod, it's herself that's wanting him to show her."

John summoned enough self-control not to make an ass of himself by saying any more to Fitz; but he could not dispel the livid cloud of jealousy which thickened round him ever denser and denser as the rehearsal progressed. He could not help recognizing that the odds were heavily in favour of the actor. For one thing he was a great deal older than himself—possibly he was as much as twenty-four or even twenty-five, which might well be too fascinating an age for Connie to resist. Was he good-looking? Certainly he had unusually large feet, and those ghastly yellow button-boots did not make them look smaller. His face, however, was not bad,

and Connie might easily consider that faded pink complexion and that blue puffiness beneath the eyes attractive evidence of hard living. His cuffs were slightly frayed and his serge suit was rather shiny; but his masterful manner gave no hint of his being hard up. He was probably in a position to marry her to-morrow. The outlook was bad. Of course Arthur Dancaster might vanish after the performance at the Bijou Theatre, back to the touring life from which malicious fortune had snatched him; but even so was not Connie herself longing to be out on tour in her first engagement? What more likely than to find herself in the same company as Dancaster?

However, Dancaster did not vanish when *As You Like It* was over, nor, it appeared, was there much likelihood now of his ceasing to rest before July when the autumn tours started. The maddening thing was that the Easter holidays were here, that his father was away for a fortnight, and that but for Arthur Dancaster it might have been possible for John to forget for three weeks that he was still a schoolboy.

Although it was some consolation to find how much Connie's family disapproved of Arthur Dancaster, that very disapproval was in the actor's favour, because it inevitably increased his appeal to Connie.

One afternoon, when John and his rival had both arrived together at the Fenwick's house to find the whole family out, the actor had invited John to come round to his digs in order, he said, that he might have the help of some advice.

Dancaster had rooms near Addison Road railway-station, and as they walked along together through the

sunny streets on that afternoon at April's end he pressed John to explain in what lay the cause of Mr Fenwick's prejudice against him.

"You know, old boy, I'm not the sort of chap who kids himself, and I can see perfectly well that old Fenwick dislikes me. Now why?"

John did not feel he could tell Dancaster that one of the reasons for this dislike was Mr Fenwick's boredom with his inability to talk about anything except his cleverness not merely on the stage but everywhere else. So he said weakly that he thought Dancaster was imagining a lot.

The actor shook his head with a theatrical deliberation.

"Look here, old man, I know I have a big imagination—in fact there are a lot of people who think I invent some of my best stories—but I'm not imagining what old Fenwick thinks of me. I don't mind telling you, though there aren't many people I would tell this to, that yesterday when Connie came down as usual to see me off the premises I distinctly heard the old chap say to his wife, 'Good gad, my dear, does that young man think Connie is the parlour-maid?' That's a bit thick, eh? Of course I pretended not to have heard anything when Connie looked at me, but I could see the poor kid was hurt, and of course that hurt me. I'm shockingly sensitive. In fact I'm as bloody near being psychic as doesn't matter. And then the other day when I was telling the old man about that time at Bristol when I fluffed my way through Shylock . . . through Shylock, old man . . . without a rehearsal because the leading man and his understudy were both down with flu, he yawned. Yes, old boy, he opened his mouth as wide as a bear

asking for a bun, and bloody well yawned. I might have put it down to his being a bit doddery and thought no more about it, but he went out of his way to say something damned unpleasant—damned unpleasant, old man. He said, 'I'm afraid you think you're talking to my daughter, Mr Dancaster.' Now that's pretty offensive. In the first place why call her 'my daughter'? He knows quite well she's Connie to me, and then why call me Mr Dancaster? I don't expect him to call me Arthur. But after all Dancaster is good enough between equals."

"He's always rather stately," John put in.

"My dear laddie, you don't have to teach me anything about heavy fathers. *You* call him 'stately'. *I* should call him 'pompous'. But we won't quarrel over that. The point I'm making is that he reserves that kind of thing for me. For some reason or other he has taken a definite dislike to me, and it's a pity, seeing that Connie and I are engaged."

John felt as if a passer-by had punched him heavily just below the heart.

"Engaged?" he stammered.

"Yes, the dear girl gave me her promise yesterday. Ogilvie, old man, I consider myself the luckiest fellow on earth. Hullo, what's the matter? You're looking a bit rotten. Come in here and have a brandy. We'll go up to the billiard-room. It'll be quiet there and we'll be able to talk."

The public-house they went into was not far from Olympia. It was the first public-house in London of which John had seen the inside. The billiard-room smelt of stale tobacco-smoke and spirit, a melancholy enough place but for the nonce empty. Dancaster and

John seated themselves on the raised settee along the window.

"Yours was a brandy, wasn't it?" the actor asked.

John hurriedly said he should prefer a glass of beer.

"A bit heavy at this time of the afternoon," Dancaaster observed. "Still, it's your inside, old man, not mine."

For himself he ordered a double Scotch with a splash. When the drinks were set down between them on the circular iron table, the surface of which was decorated with a high-kicking young woman dancing with a humanized bottle of whisky, Dancaaster produced from a waistcoat pocket a small leather case.

"The ring, old man," he announced in a reverent voice, pressing the fastener to allow the lid to spring open and reveal a gold ring set with a single ruby.

"Isn't that Her?" he asked, in a tone which suggested rather his own immense sagacity in discovering such an appropriate ring than any uniqueness in Connie. "My hat," he added reflectively, "if it wasn't Providence that put me on to that man in Salford who gave me the winner of the Grand National, what else was it? I tell you, old boy, I've knocked about in my time, but I'm beginning to realize the truth of 'there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.' Shakespeare knew. And then some blithering asses try to tell you that Shakespeare was written by Bacon. Did I ever tell you my retort to one of them? Well, it's pretty b.g. 'Perhaps you'll tell me next,' I said, 'that the Bible was written by Ham?' And he looked a bit foolish, laddie. But as I was saying, if I hadn't met that fellow in Salford last February and got a long price on that gee-gee, I couldn't have bought Connie as much as a red-currant

engagement ring let alone a ruby. And that's a good ruby. Pigeon's blood, old man."

"It looks splendid," said John.

"Now, I'm going to whisper something in your shell-like, Ogilvie, and you're not going to take it in the wrong spirit. I know you were a bit fond of Connie yourself. Don't interrupt, old boy, I don't blame you. Do you think I don't know she's a girl in a million? Look here, Ogilvie, if you ever suspect that I don't consider her the grandest little girl who ever stepped on this earth I give you free permission to kick me from one end of England to the other. And don't you start thinking that Connie said anything to me about you. All she said to me was that you were one of the best friends a girl could have. And I said, 'Right, sweetheart, the fellow you can speak of like that is my friend.' "

Dancaster leant back to sip at heart's ease the double Scotch with a splash. John sat silent. Perhaps if he had been eight years older and able to propose to Connie, armed with a ruby engagement ring, she might have loved him enough to marry him. But between them there had been nothing except a few kisses, kisses, he now supposed sadly, wrung from her out of the kindness of her heart. He had often pressed her to say that she loved him, but she had always evaded a direct answer. It seemed impossible at this moment that he would ever recover from this blow. Yet the very fact that his wound was mortal demanded from him a courageous and generous attitude toward the man who had been the author of his hurt.

"When do you think you and Connie will get married?" he asked.

"We talk of two years from now," Dancaster replied. "But of course if her father takes up this attitude it may be three. She won't be twenty-one for three years, you know."

"You haven't said anything to Mr Fenwick?"

"No, and that's where I want your advice, old man. I dislike the idea of a secret engagement. Dash it, Ogilvie, my life has been an open book since I started out on tour in Old Comedy six years ago with a salary of eighteen shillings a week and only one part worth calling a part, which was Trip in *The School for Scandal*. I'm bound to say the Guv'nor told me I was the best Trip he'd had in twenty years' management. But something whispers in my shell-like that Connie's father is going to turn down Arthur Dancaster as a prospective son-in-law. There's a *je ne sais quoi* about me which seems to irritate him. I suppose when all's said and done, it's what we call the paternal instinct. A kind of jealousy. So my notion is to let this spring and summer go by, anyway. I ought to be out on the road again in July, when of course I shall start saving. No more of these, Ogilvie," he went on, fondling the glass which had contained the double Scotch with splash. "But who cares? I tell you I'm going to enjoy saving up to marry the finest little girl in the world. The only thing is, if we're not openly engaged, it's going to be difficult to see as much of each other alone as we want. Now I don't like the idea of asking Connie round to my digs. In the first place the landlady is a tartar and in the second place somebody might see her, and by God, old man, I'd sooner be a Junior Prompter till the Last Ring Down than compromise Connie. So I was wondering, old man, and this is where I want

your advice, I was wondering if you could ask us both up to your place some time and give us the chance of a really good long talk about the future. I know your pater's away just now; but if you were there—in the house, I mean—why, that would make it absolutely all right."

To be courageous and generous? And here was the opportunity.

"Why, of course I will," said John.

As he made this promise two of the Olympia freaks came in to play billiards. One was the Skeleton Man: the other was the Oriental with the child's body attached. To see him pushing aside this dead weight of human flesh when he bent over to make a shot was more than John could stand. The emotion of this afternoon seized upon the disgust he felt to find expression.

"Come out of here, Dancaster," he urged. "I shall be sick in a minute, watching those two."

The air of the golden April afternoon for all the dust of London tasted sweet after that stale billiard-room.

"You'd better come up with Connie to-morrow afternoon," he told his successful rival. "Shall I write and ask her?"

"No, I'll find a way to let her know."

John felt incapable of staying longer in Dancaster's company. He had left his bicycle at a shop for some minor adjustment. On the plea of having to go and see about it he escaped. When he was alone again he was able to believe that what he was going to do for Connie was in the grand style of noble behaviour. The emptiness of personal loss was filled for the time with a windy elation. No day-dream is so bewitching to the male as the

day-dream of self-sacrifice. The David Garricks and Sydney Cartons and a hundred other figures of the popular stage testify to that.

It happened that Mrs Stern had invited him to go that evening with herself and Emil to a concert at Queen's Hall. Tchaikovsky's Pathetic Symphony, which at this date was still far from being hackneyed, was to be played, and no piece of music more appropriate to John's mood of self-compassion could have been provided. He had not expected to find himself capable of such a response to large-scale orchestral music until he heard this symphony, and he was on the point of rebuking Mrs Stern when she decided that it made a too undignified appeal to the emotions to be granted the name of great art. He was nearly saying to her that only the stricken heart could understand the depth of this symphony's despair. Luckily for his vanity later he did not make such a fool of himself.

"Wouldn't you allow a composer to be as personal as a poet?" he asked.

"Yes, but he mustn't crawl, John."

"Still, might not this symphony be the expression of an unhappiness which had to express itself like this or go mad?"

"If it is, the mind that thus expresses itself is morbid," she said. "I prefer Balzac. To the wounded heart shadow and silence—*l'ombre et le silence*. Didn't you feel that first movement to be one long whine?"

The whining schoolboy! John decided to take refuge in his ignorance of music.

"I expect you're right, Mrs Stern; but it did move me, and I don't think I am easily moved yet by music."

"Aren't we moved by whatever we can pin on to our own experience?" Emil asked. "I was moved by this symphony too, but I'm sure that in a few years I shall wonder why. The real point is not whether we are moved by it, but what its intellectual content is."

"Yes, but I've not reached the stage of being able to talk about the intellectual content of music," John objected. "And I don't suppose I ever shall."

"I'm glad that it was able to make even an emotional appeal to John," said Mrs Stern. "Besides I dare say I am prejudiced. I read the Russian writer Dostoevsky with just the same prejudice. I have seen so much emotion indulged in for the pleasure of indulgence that I want my literature and my music be to harder. And Tchaikovsky certainly is soft."

A messenger boy came next morning to 98 Church Row with a note from Arthur Dancaaster to say that he and Connie would arrive separately at John's house round about half-past two. He might be a few minutes late himself as he had to go down to Maiden Lane to see an agent. There was the chance of his getting a shop immediately, and he did not want to miss it.

So it was Connie who arrived first.

"There's a young lady asking for you, Master John," Watson announced with a hint of disapproval in her voice. "But I didn't get her name perfectly clear."

John hurried past Watson down to the hall to bring Connie up to the library. She was wearing a fawn-coloured coat and skirt, a light feather boa, and a chip hat wreathed with crimson cherries. To John she seemed incarnate Spring.

In the library she pulled off her glove and showed

John the ring upon her third finger. Yes, the ruby had been well chosen.

"What a fool you must have thought me," he sighed.

"No girl thinks anybody a fool for loving her," she murmured in that deep faintly husky voice which always sent his blood coursing. "But, John dear, you won't go on loving me. No, no, don't look so indignant. You'll be wondering within a year what could have made you fancy you ever did love me."

"Of course, if you want to think that, you'll think it. It's no good arguing about what may happen. Time will show you. But, Connie, you do love Dancaster?"

"I do love him, John dear."

"It was so quick."

"It would have been just as quick if I had loved you. And, John, you know I very nearly did. Perhaps it was only my sense of the ridiculous which stood in the way."

"Oh, I'm ridiculous, am I?"

"Not you. But to fall seriously in love with somebody over a year younger than myself. That would have been ridiculous."

"A year is not so much as all that."

"It's a long time when one is eighteen, John. I ought never to have let you kiss me. It was wrong of me really; but I did not know then that Arthur was going to come into my life like that."

"You're going to keep the engagement secret?"

"We must. Father won't take Arthur seriously. In fact he has been quite horrid about him. And you know Arthur is such a darling."

John gulped. He was prepared to sacrifice his own feelings to nobility of behaviour; but he had hoped that

Connie would not expect him to admit humbly his rival's superiority to himself.

Luckily Watson came in to say that there was a gentleman who wished to speak to Master John.

"Show him up here, please."

When the old parlour-maid had retired John told Connie that he was going to leave her and Dancaaster in this room, where he would come and fetch them for tea at half-past four. Connie flushed.

"John, what a dear you are!" she exclaimed, putting out an impulsive hand. Alas, John's consciousness of a sublime sacrifice was fast deserting him. He was beginning to feel jealousy shivering through him like a cold nausea. He hurried out of the room as Dancaaster entered it, throwing a greeting over his shoulder and noticing his silhouette against the sunny window-pane when he moved across the quiet carpet to greet Connie.

"Watson! Watson! We'll have tea in the dining-room at half-past four," he called after the parlour-maid. Then he retired upstairs to his own room and sat looking down over the lime-trees and chestnuts in the gardens, over the sheen of grey roofs in the blue haze of London from which here and there steeple-tops flashed and the wings of circling pigeons glittered in the sun's eye. It was in Hampstead just about a hundred years ago that Keats had thought it rich to die on the song of a nightingale and forget the fever and the loneliness and fret of human existence. It would be richer still to die upon this April afternoon in one wild swoop.

What was there to live for? The great poems had been written. The battles worth fighting in had been fought. From the boredom of school he had been plunged into

the excitement of love, and within a month he was faced with nothing except the boredom of school again. Yes, it would come to an end in a little over a year, but another three years of dependency would follow. By the time freedom was his it would not be worth having. Fitz had the vision of his country's freedom. Emil had the vision of changing the ways of nations. If Connie had loved him he could have struggled somehow through these endless years of youth, and with her help he could have reached some decision about what he wanted to do in life . . . and thus for the rest of the afternoon John brooded by his window, yielding without the armour of experience to the lovesick egoism of youth.

At twenty minutes past four John went down to the library. Feeling ashamed of the precaution lest in Connie's eye it might stamp him as common, he fumbled with the handle of the door for a moment before entering. Dancaaster was jumping away from the armchair toward the fireplace, his usually faded pink complexion a peony red, Connie darkly flushed was sitting back awkwardly in the armchair, her hair ruffled, her eyes in a melting glitter. Both looked hot and sticky and hatefully undignified. Dancaaster sniggered. Connie tittered. It was the ugliest sight John had seen, the physical evidence of this love he had thought to make beautiful for himself and for them by proving the selflessness of his own devotion. He wanted to scowl at Dancaaster to express his opinion of his behaviour, for it was he who must be blamed for exposing Connie to this intolerable humiliation. Yet out of embarrassment for them both all he could do was to smile weakly and ask if they had enjoyed

their afternoon together. Yes, he was one of three now, in a hideous group.

"Well, I've got a shop, old boy," Dancaster was saying. "So it was really our good-bye this afternoon."

Connie had risen now from the armchair. She was searching in its depths for a comb which had slipped from her hair.

"I think tea will be ready now," John announced. He was trying to endow the commonplace refreshment with a kind of lustral significance as if thereby the afternoon could be wiped out. As they passed through the door Connie pulled him back. Her hand was hot and damp.

"You were such a dear to leave us like that," she murmured.

John mumbled in embarrassment. That recognition of his selflessness which should have been so ennobling merely made him feel a broken-backed ass. Had Troilus a crumpled collar in the Trojan moonlight or Cressida untidy hair and a sticky hand?

It was an attempt to present the situation ideally which first led John to write a story. In this story he was again the nobly disinterested, the unworthily rejected lover. The substance of Arthur Dancaster under the accidents of a French count revealed itself for what it was. In fact his behaviour as a French count to the unhappy Valérie was even more odious on paper than John had ever allowed himself, before he took pen in hand, to suppose Arthur Dancaster might be to Connie. After winning Valérie's heart the Count tossed it from him like the discarded plaything it seemed to such a rake. John in the guise of a chivalrous young Scotsman, the

greatness of whose love Valérie had failed to appreciate, challenged the Count to a duel. In the first version of the story the young Scotsman was shot in a secluded corner of the Champs-Élysées at sunrise on a fine morning in May, calling upon the Count with his last breath to repair the injury he had done to an innocent girl, the reader being left to imagine that the Count's next action would be to obtain a marriage licence. John was particularly pleased with the way the blood of the chivalrous young Scotsman "dyed the fallen chestnut-blossom to a richer red than was ever seen in the famous avenue that ran for over a mile through the park which surrounded the splendid château of Count d'Avignaud in the fair land of Touraine."

John was wondering whether he might not try the effect of this death scene on Connie when word came that Dancaster had found her an engagement in the very company with which he was himself touring, thanks to the sudden illness of the young woman who played the soubrette part. There was a good deal of argument at the house in Gladwyn Road before Mr Fenwick agreed to sanction his daughter's first professional engagement. It had been seeming far enough away until the advent of Mr Arthur Dancaster.

"I don't like the fellah. I consider him a boundah."

Mrs. Fenwick could not be so severe as her husband. She had retained many of the prejudices of her upbringing, and could not withhold a measure of respect for anything so definite as her daughter's engagement to Arthur Dancaster. Young men had kept company in her circle—sometimes for years. Maternal pride could not be kept in perfect control. In the end Connie was allowed to go,

and as a sign of her right to freedom she sported the ruby ring her fiancé had given her. John was moodily jealous of the opportunities touring life would offer for behaviour like that on the afternoon in Church Row. To add to his depression Hetty confided in him the tale of an unfortunate experience of her own when staying with a French family in that fair land of Touraine where John's villain had his château and park and avenue of horse-chestnuts. An attractive young man, whom she had met at the various social events of the neighbourhood to which she was scrupulously taken for the improvement of her polite small-talk in French, had apparently seduced her. At any rate, that was the least John could suppose had happened from the details Hetty gave him. The last year of the nineteenth century did not provide young women with the sexual jargon with which their daughters were to be equipped. And in the last year of the nineteenth century the thought of a young Englishwoman of sweet and twenty being seduced by a Frenchman was extremely shocking to a youth of seventeen. John had heard a few ribald boasts from contemporaries who had played the Don Johnnie with favouring maidservants, but such advanced amorists had always been careful to stress the fact that they were not the first. The biggest ribs of John's acquaintance shuddered at the thought of being pioneers when a woman's virtue had to be spoilt. The immediate reaction of Hetty's confidence was a sudden shameful desire for her. Astonishment at his own baseness was succeeded by a sharp disgust with himself, which took all the pleasure out of staining the fallen chestnut-blossom in the Champs-Élysées with the blood of the chivalrous young Scotsman who was

his own heroic self. John changed the end of his story and left the Count upon the field of honour, the contemptuous smile for his young rival fixed upon his pale face by death. When Hetty told John the tale of her French romance he supposed that she was making an example of herself to warn him what might be the result of Connie's acting on tour in the same company as Arthur Dancaaster. It did not strike him that the desire this revelation quickened in him was reciprocated by Hetty, and the fear that in a moment of weakness he might reveal to her his own baseness kept him away from Gladwyn Road. One day he met her casually and was reproached for the desertion of his friends.

"I know you'll forget all about us one day," she told him, "but you needn't forget us so soon."

John assured her that his was not the kind of temperament that forgot old friends.

"But you won't be able to help it. Your life will be such a different kind of life," she insisted.

John was puzzled, for not being ambitious in his dreams he did not understand why she should hint at something he was not imagining for his own future.

"Don't be foolish, John. You won't deliberately drop us because you don't think us good enough for you. I'm not suggesting that. But it's inevitable. Don't you realize that? You'll move in a different world."

"Not if it means chucking old friends," he declared obstinately.

"John, do you seriously suppose that even a year hence you'll be wanting our house or any of the people in it?"

"I suppose you're saying this because I haven't been

round to see you for a week. If I were to tell you the reason for that, you'd be absolutely astonished."

She gave him a quick look, and John to his chagrin knew his eyes were kindling. It was humiliating to think how Hetty would mock what he had believed to be his love for her sister. So recently parted from Connie, and already in his heart unfaithful to her!

"I don't think I should be so very much astonished," Hetty was murmuring, and there was in her voice a vibrancy which seemed actively to fan the glow behind his eyes. It did not strike him, however, that Hetty was far from despising his fickleness, for he had turned his head away and had not seen her own brown eyes melting.

"Anyhow, it's silly to be discussing what will happen a year from now," he said irritably. "I shall probably be stifled by boredom with this endless business of school. What's the use of talking here when it's ten to three and by three I have to be sitting at a desk and answering any idiotic question the usher chooses to ask me?"

"Come round to tea with us after school," she pressed.

But John shook his head.

"I've got to play in a form match."

Once upon a time these hours of cricket, amber hours after school, had cast a magic over the summer term. They had been eclogues, with bat for shepherd's crook and pads for goatskin mantle. Woman had not trespassed within that paradise. John's mind went back to that fine summer three years ago, the year of the Diamond Jubilee . . . the long shadows of the wickets in the declination of the seven o'clock sun . . . stained paper-bags full of cherry-stones pitched away into the privet bushes beside the pavilion . . . the last pair in for the

Classical Upper Fourth with three runs still to make to defeat the Modern Fourth B in the final and win the Junior Form Cricket Shield that year . . . the great golden face of the school clock showing three minutes to the hour. A fluky stroke between mid-off and cover-point. 'Run it out, run it out!' A desperate dash from the crease to get the third run. A fumble by the Modern Fourth wicket-keeper. Himself and Heythrop running toward the pavilion. Himself and Heythrop walking along the cloister toward the changing-room under the great red pile of the school. Duskish that cloister already, though sunset was an hour away. The sinewy slimness and hardness of Heythrop's arm as he gripped it affectionately. 'Yours was a ripping knock, Haycock.' 'Well, you stuck it jolly well, Judge, and that last hit of mine was a most stinking fluke. I thought I was hitting the ball round to leg.' 'What a rag, did you really?' 'I say, is the Tuck shut?' 'Yes.' 'Gosh, I could drink a ginger-beer, couldn't you?' 'Rather!' 'Let's go to Miss Briney's.'

Along the Hammersmith Road to Miss Briney's sweetshop. A suspicious old woman with a moustache, and a hairy mole on the end of her nose, and eyes like boot-buttons. 'I'll stand you an apricot noyau, Judge.' 'Now have a raspberry noyau with me, Haycock.' No more raspberry. Only greengage left. 'What a swizzle!' The slabs of noyau and the ginger-beer sharpen the appetite. 'How about some nougat?' No purchase equals this for extravagance. Threepence hardly takes you further into the lusciousness of nougat than a penny elsewhere. But the Junior Form Shield has been won and although the heroes who have won

it will be in the Lower Fifth next term and never watch its silver glitter on the wall of their classroom, they feel that nougat is the right ambrosia for immortals. So nougat succeeds noyau. And, to wind up, a mixed strawberry cream and lemon-water ice at twopence.

And then Heythrop, whose father is a doctor in Barnes, invites Ogilvie to tea with him next Saturday afternoon. After tea a walk along the towing-path. A rest upon a green bank hidden by osiers from the world. The Thames before them, majestic-seeming as ocean. Heythrop and himself. The warm July twilight. The noise of rowlocks and splash of clumsy oars and female giggles over the dimming water. 'What asses girls are, Judge!' 'Frightful asses, Haycock.' Deepening July twilight. Lapping of water among the reeds. Quickening of two hearts as Heythrop and Ogilvie turn on the cool grass to look at one another. Heythrop's grey eyes are shining visibly even in this warm July dusk. To say they were like stars would embarrass him that spake the simile and him that heard it. 'I vote when we're alone we'll call each other by our Christian names, John.' 'Rather, let's . . . Dick.'

Dick Heythrop! It had been brief enough that love, but never spoilt. Drowned a fortnight later in that very Thames which had lapped above the whispers of their boyish passion. Drowned on the first day of the summer holidays three years ago. Dick Heythrop would probably have been in the Eleven this term. He was the best bat among the Classical Juniors three years ago.

"Hullo, Judge, you're looking damned solemn."

John came to himself with a start. He was walking up the school steps, and the five-minutes bell was sounding for afternoon school. Two more hours of ennui. Two more hours of pedagogues' humour. Two more hours of pen-driving and turning back to the paragraph on page eighty-two and looking up the note on page two hundred and eleven, and taking down in your note-book this or that unnecessary elaboration of some minor point of interpretation. Conington reads. Papillon suggests. Jebb has an interesting emendation. Verrall boldly proposes. Two hours of stale summer air and buzzing of captive bluebottles and scratching nibs and glazed maps of Graecia Antiqua and Italia Antiqua and the Orbis Terrarum. Two more hours of plaster bas-reliefs and plaster models of temples and plaster heads and plaster fig-leaves and plaster torsos. A world of plaster, with Askew's pointer to direct one onward into a plaster futurity. Two more hours of polished wooden seats and penknife-hacked desklids and muddy inkpots and holland blinds pulled down to shut out the sunlight. Two more hours of Askew's rusty voice and grizzled beard.

"Are you riding back at five o'clock?"

John turned round in the corridor leading to the Lower Sixth classroom to let Emil Stern overtake him.

"No, I've got to play in a form match."

And that was nowadays almost as dreary a business as these endless weary hours of school.

"My mother wondered if you could come with us to the opera on Friday. Somebody has given her a box at Covent Garden."

When John asked leave of his father he fancied from his expression that the request was going to be met with the paternal objections to which he was accustomed.

"Covent Garden on Friday, eh?"

The eminent barrister's forehead was wrinkled in the way that so many Crown witnesses had seen it wrinkle when his suave cross-examination was failing to discredit their testimony.

"Well, Friday's the best evening for me," John put in quickly.

"Quite so. Quite so." Alexander Ogilvie hesitated again, still wrinkled. "They're doing *Aida*," he went on.

"Are they?" said John vaguely. It had not occurred to his inexperience of Covent Garden opera that the particular opera to be given had any bearing on the matter.

"I don't know that *Aida* is the one I would have chosen for you to see first. I should have thought *Faust* or *Carmen* . . . still, oh well, yes, you'd better take advantage of the offer." There was another wrinkled pause. Then an abrupt announcement. "As a matter of fact I'm going to Covent Garden myself next Friday. By the way, you know, you'll want a tail-coat. I think I can let you have a suit of mine. I'll tell Watson to get it out, and you can try it on before dinner."

The suit smelt of camphor, but it fitted John well, and it did not seem to him old-fashioned. He came down to dinner that night, pleased with himself.

"For heaven's sake, my boy, don't wear that ghastly choker. It makes your head look like a cauliflower."

"These are the only stick-up evening collars I've got."

"What size do you take?"

"Fifteen."

"Ah, yes, I'm afraid mine will be no good to you. You'd better buy some collars from my shirtmaker. He'll advise you. That bank-clerk's neckwear is unpleasant. Do you know I only gave up wearing that suit four years ago? If you have a figure like that at forty-two you'll have nothing to grumble about."

Mr Cuthbertson received John on Saturday morning with the respect due to the son of so eminent a barrister and so excellent a customer.

"But we must make you some shirts, Mr Ogilvie. Oh, I'm sure your father intended you to order some shirts. Dash it, I'll take the dashed responsibility myself."

Mr Cuthbertson, with his little black waxed moustache on his small waxy face, wearing widely braided black tailcoat and widely braided black trousers, darted about the discreet little Jermyn Street shop like a busy little garden beetle.

"But I'll want them for next Friday," said John.

"Dash it, sir, you shall have the dashed shirts by Thursday. We'll build you three. Hee-heel! The next time your father looks in I'll ask him if he wouldn't like to complete the half-dozen. And how many studs in front? Now, sir, will you let me give you a little piece of advice? Make it two. Dash it, solitaires have gone the way of Queen Anne. And yet you'll find gentlemen who ought to know better still trying to fasten down their shirt-fronts with one small pearl. Make it two, Mr Ogilvie. Two will establish itself as the number—not three. I know, I know." Mr Cuthbertson held up a dainty hand. "You're going to tell me that all your friends who don't carry one stud are carrying three. But dash it, and don't misunderstand what I'm going to say, sir—dash it, all

your friends are not buying their shirts in Jermyn Street. High Street, Kensington, is as near as most of them get. I know. I know. We'll mention no names; but the firm in question is not Jermyn Street. A decent respectable business, yes, but very definitely *not* Jermyn Street."

John was beginning to feel uncomfortably aware of the label on his own shirt.

"Now don't misunderstand me, sir. Dash it, I don't want to be misunderstood. But what was all very well for the schoolboy won't do for the man about town. We're not snobs, Mr Ogilvie. But we have our little prejudices, eh? And dash it, with Mafeking relieved and all that, don't you know, I say that the Empire is showing the rest of the world what is meant by an English gentleman, and I don't intend to let your father's son commit the teeniest dashed indiscretion so far as his outward appearance goes. Now, let me see, sir, who are your tailors, sir?"

Mr Cuthbertson looked at the label on John's jacket and shook his head.

"If I remember rightly, Mr Ogilvie Senior entrusts Bunting with his clothes. Capital old firm. Remarkable man, old Mr Bunting. Doesn't cut now, of course; but he writes out every bill in his own hand. Over eighty, sir, with a pair of Piccadilly weepers that would have made Lord Dundreary jealous. Yes, every dashed bill with his own hand. Won't allow a typewriter in the shop. And I wouldn't like to say how many of the officers who fell in the charge of the Light Brigade he cut for. Dash it, call dancing the poetry of motion? If you wanted to see the poetry of motion you looked at a pair of breeches by Bunting. Take my advice, sir, and the first chance you

get, ask your father to give you an introduction to Bunting's. Your father is one of the handsomest men at the Bar, and if he goes to Bunting's you can feel sure that he goes there to make the best of himself. And now for these collars. . . . If you take my advice you'll go straight for the wing. The wing is coming back, Mr Ogilvie. In another year you won't see a well-dressed man wearing anything else with formal clothes. Look at this model. We're advocating the gently rounded wing at the moment. Isn't that delicate? You're up to Latin and Greek, of course. Now, tell me, isn't that just the pair of dainty wings you'd fit to Cupid himself? You're laughing at me. Oh yes, you are, sir, and dash it, why shouldn't you? But that model carries me away every time I look at it. A dozen will be enough? And I'd like to show you this new double collar we're putting out. Very natty, isn't it? We had the Honourable Cecil Sturgess-Hughes in yesterday, and he said 'Damn it, Cuthbertson, I consider that collar the neatest I've seen.' Excuse the language, sir, but that's Mr Sturgess-Hughes's way. But perhaps you know him? He's off to South Africa soon with his squadron. Still, I feel happier about everything since Mafeking. What a night, eh? A genuine patriotic demonstration. It shows the country's sound in spite of all these pro-Boers. Do you know what I'd do with these pro-Boers? I'd denaturalize them. Dash it, I'd hand them over to old Kruger. And now you'll be wanting some white ties of course. Piqué? Do you like to tie your white tie in a single knot, and tuck the end under the collar? That's a habit which is certainly growing. No doubt about it. You'd prefer the double knot? As you like. Now is there anything else you're wanting this morning? I see. Well,

dash it, do you know what I'm going to do the next time your father pays me a call? I'm going to ask him to let me fit you out. And dash it, you mark my words, he will. Your father is a man for whose abilities I have a dashed great respect, and he knew what he was doing when he sent you to Cuthbertson. Don't give another thought to it. The shirts *and* the collars *and* the ties will be with you by Thursday."

John tried the effect of them on his father that same evening at dinner.

"Good god, my boy, don't tuck the ends of your tie under the wings of your collar like that. Yes, well, if you can get into that tail-coat twenty-five years from now life will have treated you kindly. And mind you, it was only just beginning to be a little tight for me under the arms. Are you dining with these friends of yours before the opera?"

"At Romano's, I think."

"That's all right, because I shall be dining out too. Oh, and by the way I see they're not doing *Aida*. They've changed to *Traviata*. That says nothing to you?" the barrister asked.

His son shook his head.

"Do you know which tier your box is on?"

Again John shook his head.

Alexander Ogilvie was pensive for a few moments.

"I shall be in the stalls," he murmured at last.

John nodded, with as polite an assumption of interest as he could manage. Curious creatures, fathers. They always seemed to suppose that one should be impressed by that kind of information. Who wanted to know where one's father was at the theatre?

It was a spangled evening in the prime of June when Mrs Stern with John and Emil walked up from Romano's through Covent Garden, and on the cooling air the scent of crushed flowers and vegetables lingered. The traffic in the Strand sounded like the sea being left behind when one was walking back to seaside lodgings on a summer holiday morning of childhood. The market was quiet except for the jingle and clap of the hansoms over the cobbled roadway. Miriam Stern was wearing an opera-cloak of oyster-grey silk with a collar of ostrich plumes. As if to help herself up the slope she put her arm in John's with a sudden gesture of affectionate intimacy.

"John is so tremendously grown-up to-night," she turned round to say to Emil who in jacket and white waistcoat did indeed look five years younger than his friend.

The box was a small one on the top tier on the O.P. side, and when the attendant gently closed the door behind them the humdrum world was hardly imaginable in this exquisite world of make-believe, where the audience itself was but a scene in a play. The crimson curtains and valances of the boxes gave each one an air of a puppet-show, so that the figures within appeared like mechanical toys whose movements were dependent on their designer's artifice. The men could all bend over the seated ladies with an appearance of stiffly conversing. The ladies could all play with their great fans. That was the utmost they could suggest of sentient humanity. As for the people in the stalls and the gallery, they were equally unreal, and when John leaned over to see if he could distinguish his father below he quickly withdrew again to the shadow of

the box as if such an action implying an existence outside this world of make-believe were an insult to the decorum of these delicate marionettes.

"Not *Aida*," Mrs Stern was saying as she looked at her programme; and to John it seemed as if every puppet was saying the same thing, as if all the programmes in the theatre were fluttering like a myriad disturbed butterflies.

"*Traviata*," Emil added glumly. "Oh well, it doesn't matter. One's as silly as the other."

"But you know, Emil dear, I'm still old-fashioned enough to enjoy *Traviata*," and with this declaration Miriam Stern's voice died away among the quivering violins of the prelude to the first act.

If the audience had presented itself to John's fancy as unreal before the curtain went up they seemed twice as unreal when it came down again at the end of the first act, such a feverish actuality of life had palpitated on the stage, down to which he had longed to float that he might stand on a chair with one leg on the table and wine-glass in hand drink to love. And when Alfredo's voice was heard outside in the dawn, coming back to Violetta, coming back to her, John should have blessed his father and Mr Cuthbertson for abolishing his choker, such a lump was there in his throat.

*Amor, amor è palpito
dell' universo, dell' universo intero,
misterioso,
misterioso, altero, croce,
croce e delizia, delizia al cor!*

"I really think this is even stupider than *Trovatore*," Emil declared when the applause for Alfredo and Violetta was finished.

"Darling, I beg you not to make John and me feel so inferior," his mother said, with that low deep end of a laugh rather like the note of a ringdove, which was the only positive expression of mirth she ever allowed herself.

Down in the stalls, Alexander Ogilvie was telling his companion, a handsome young woman in her late twenties, with a high pompadour of light brown hair, that he had not yet been able to discover his son's whereabouts.

"And I am so longing to see him, Alec," she insisted. "You men of law are so cautious. I love the way you propose to bring him before the notice of his future stepmother."

"Well, you see, Elise, I want him . . . I want to give him our news in such a way that he'll love you. And don't talk of yourself as his stepmother, pray."

"But Alec, I shall be."

"Yes, yes, yes," the eminent barrister agreed, with that suave impatience he occasionally showed with a refractory female witness. "But in these days we are not quite so anxious to accentuate our ages."

"But seriously, Alec, isn't it time you did say something to your John? For I warn you that I am determined to be your wife in time to have most of the Long Vacation for a honeymoon."

"I know. It must be settled soon. As a matter of fact I have thought of a plan. I shall take him with me to Switzerland as soon as I can get away, and arrange the whole business. I see no reason to keep him on at school after this term. Dear me, I wish I could find him for you. Ah, there he is! The fourth box along on the top tier. My glasses are stronger than yours. He's with a rather handsome dark woman and a boy in Etons."

"But, Alec, he's adorably good-looking," she exclaimed. "Of course I won't be his stepmother. I'll be the sweetest and kindest and most sympathetic of elder sisters."

"Yes, he's a well-set-up lad. I find him a little difficult; he's wearing a dress-suit of my own," the barrister added with some unction. "It's extraordinary how long well-cut clothes last."

"And the figures of successful lawyers," observed Elise Hunter with a smile, patting Alec Ogilvie's knee. "And presently we shall see the old-fashioned father," she added as the curtain rose on the second act to display the tenor in the execrable check shooting-suit which was always donned as an indication of his '*bolleenti spiriti*,' in the love-nest where he and his Violetta were living.

*Pura siccome un angelo,
Iddio mi diè una figlia.*

That was exactly the way his own father would butt in, John was thinking gloomily, as he listened to the barytone's moving exposition of paternal rights and watched his dignified frock-coat set off by the prodigal red roses which were tumbling in a cascade over Violetta's front gate, over the french-windows of the love-nest, over the brick wall that excluded the cruel world.

*Dite alla giovine
sì bella e pura
ch' avvi una vittima
della sventura.*

John's eyes were beginning to blink the heavy tears from his lashes. Violetta's melodious renunciation was not so unlike his own renunciation of Connie. At least

it could be said in old Germont's favour that he seemed to have an inkling he was asking the unhappy young woman to make a fearful sacrifice.

By the end of the act, when Alfredo had flung the purse at Violetta's feet, John had discovered a remarkable likeness between the tenor and Arthur Dancaster.

"So much of young love in this opera," Miriam Stern sighed when the audience was murmurous again. "So much, so very much."

John nodded gravely; of this opinion he had now a right to utter a firm endorsement.

Emil shook his head.

"All this champagne and tears and roses seems to me quite incredibly sentimental and false," he declared severely. "Did people ever behave like this?"

"Did and do in essentials," his mother replied, "though the superficial behaviour may have changed."

"But what on earth has it got to do with the old gentleman if his son is having an affair with a cocotte?" Emil protested. "And why should it stand in the way of his daughter's marriage? And would any woman go on loving such an intolerable prig as Alfredo? Anyway, it's all so tawdry and novelettish and nurserymaidy."

"But so much heartache in it, my dear," Miriam Stern urged, "even if there is a good deal of sweet champagne."

"Well, of course I must look facts in the face," said her son. "And I don't see why we should go on using an anatomical arrangement for housing the passions which was exploded years ago. We call egotistical sensuality heartache and think we have somehow ennobled it thereby into something else."

"Darling, I hate to say this, but aren't you just a little young, or, if that is too insulting, just without quite all the necessary experience, to be so dogmatic on this subject?"

"That experience teaches may be a fallacy," Emil retorted. "Imagination worked upon by the experience of others such as we can always find in the great poets is probably a much more valuable tutor than the tawdry little erotic adventures with a practical experience of which an unimaginative bank-clerk is allowed to be the superior of Shakespeare or Propertius. I'll grant you, if you like, that Dumas' novel *La Dame Aux Camélias* is a chosen mirror of prostitutes, but only because it flatters them. I'll grant at the same time that the most flattering mirror must reflect partially the truth. What I will not grant is that the commonplace truth is worth reflecting and that the false flattering reflection is anything except profoundly immoral. We've outlived the right to pre-occupy ourselves emotionally with this kind of thing. We have a new age before us in which we have to pre-occupy ourselves not with individual woes but with the huge wrongs to masses. How can we listen to this sort of thing when people all over the world are starving in a world richer than it has ever been? When people . . ."

"Oh, I say, do shut up, Emil, the orchestra is beginning," John protested as the violins like aspens in a disquieting wind started the prelude to the last act.

As the lights dimmed in the front of the house Miriam saw the eye of her son's friend shining in the illumination of the stage, his lips whispering, she fancied, the poignant melody. The heartache her son disdained was hers. Let

it be foolish! But who that had once loved could keep from tears when that stage lover came back to his stage love?

*Addio del passato,
Be' sogni ridenti.*

Who after that perfect expression of a woman's farewell to life could keep from tears when she ran across the stage to that '*Violetta! O, mia Violetta! O gioia!*'?

*Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo,
La vita, uniti, trascorreremo
De' corsi affanni compenso avrai,
La tua salute rifiorirà.*

Miriam put out her hand in the darkness of this musty old box, which at this moment was so far from the humdrum world that such a gesture lost its folly as the expression of the emotion of a woman for a boy twenty years younger than herself. Was he aware what he was doing when his brown fingers curled round her hand? Was she not the dying Violetta, he the remorseful Alfredo? Was this wise disapproving child on her right in very fact her child, fruit of what the humdrum world would have presumed to be a reasonable, an appropriate passion? Was he not aware, that other on her left, whose fingers were making her hand faint, her heart thud, her blood swirl, her lids droop hot and dry over aching eyes, must he not be aware of what his clasp was meaning to her? Suddenly, the musty box, the last poignant scene of the opera, the dim audience below like pebbles, all were obliterated by a memory of that scene when Anna Karenina gives herself and of that cruel sentence in which

Tolstoi conjures the undignified appearance of Anna Karenina in passion's dishevelment and disarray. . . .

GOD SAVE OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN . . .

"Well, I never enjoyed anything as much as that," John was declaring provocatively to Emil.

"You're very easily pleased then," was the retort.

Jogging back to Hampstead in the brougham Mrs Stern had hired for that evening John asked if she would mind reading a story he had written and telling him what she thought about it. He had decided during the performance of *La Traviata* to be a writer.

"But I must be careful," Miriam Stern was saying to herself. "Nothing is more fatal to dignity than playing Egeria to a boy twenty years younger than oneself."

John had been home half an hour when he heard his father's hansom drive up. Drawing upon the accumulated emotion of *Traviata* he had been adding a sentence here and there to his short story. He pushed the manuscript out of sight in a blotter as the smoke of his father's cigar reached the library from the hall below.

"Ah, there you are. I saw you in the box."

"Did you? I didn't see you."

Alexander Ogilvie's handsome prosperous-seeming face fell slightly. All the way back he had been counting on his son's saying he had seen him, possibly even saying he had seen him with a lady, upon which he was going to announce that the lady was Miss Elise Hunter.

'She's the daughter of Sir William Hunter, one of the Lords Justices of Appeal, you know. And, as a matter of fact, I've recently . . . she has done me the honour . . . she and I became engaged to be married last week . . . it's not yet announced. . . . I wanted to tell you first before the public announcement was made.'

It had sounded easy when the hansom was taking its leisurely course up Fitzjohn's Avenue. But here and now in this room it was impossible. Here and now Athene was sitting in that armchair, and the very pattern of the Morris cretonne with which it was covered was hardly faded yet. The speckled breasts of the thrushes were as clear as ever among the leaves, the strawberries they were stealing as rich a red. As for his son, he had shrunk from the slim youth whose father's tail-coat so well became him to a little boy in a sailor-suit sitting beside her on that very footstool and listening large-eyed to her reading for him the story of Big Claus and Little Claus.

"Oh, you didn't see me?"

"No, I would have waved. I enjoyed *Traviata* most awfully."

"Yes, it keeps its charm. Have a cigar?"

John wondered if his father had taken to himself the lesson from Germont's behaviour in the opera. He had never offered him even a cigarette before. Or was he going mad?

"Thanks."

"A whisky and soda?"

"No, thanks."

"I've been thinking about your future," Alexander Ogilvie announced. "Are you still without plans for a career?"

John became cautious. Could his father have discovered anything about that story he had written?

"I'd rather not decide anything definite just yet. I wish I could leave school, that's all," said John.

"As a matter of fact," his father went on, "I've been thinking lately that perhaps in your case St James's has outlived its utility. Of course, you can't go up to the University next October; but I was wondering whether you would not like to try a year abroad—in France or Germany, or perhaps best of all Switzerland. And it occurred to me that we might go out to Switzerland and fix something up. I want to get away by July. I need a holiday. Once you have made up your mind to leave, you need not wait for the formal end of term."

It must have been the effect of old Germont's penitence in the last act, John decided. Some strong emotional shock was the only explanation of this sudden outburst of paternal common sense.

"Do you really mean I can leave school this term?" he gasped.

"Yes, yes. I've thought out what would be most useful for you."

John exhaled in a long sigh of contentment the smoke of that cigar which was the tangible pledge of comparative freedom. His father eyed him. Was not this the moment to announce his marriage? It was ridiculous to be feeling apologetic—quite ridiculous. It was worse than ridiculous: it was cowardly.

"I have been meaning to tell you, John, for some time now that I am going . . ."

To a father who had at last comprehended what he was enduring from the bondage of school John owed an

affectionate attention. He gave it, looking at his father with his mother's eyes. Alexander Ogilvie could not complete the announcement. He stammered:

"That I am going to take silk," he substituted. "There are disadvantages of course, but I have considered the matter very carefully from every point of view, and if I make up my mind to contest a parliamentary seat . . ." He broke off with a forensic gesture.

"I didn't know you were interested in politics."

"Liberalism is bound to revive. There will probably be a General Election this autumn, and the country will give the Conservatives enough rope to hang themselves for the General Election after."

"I didn't even know that you were a Liberal."

Alexander Ogilvie might have replied that he had not been perfectly convinced himself that he was a Liberal until he realized what a number of barristers of his own standing were Unionists.

"Oh yes, I've always been a Liberal; but of course my work at the Bar has not given me much opportunity for serious politics."

"When actually do you think I shall leave . . . I mean when are you going to Switzerland?"

"By the end of the month; but you'll want to get fitted out, and so I think you may as well leave at the end of next week."

John felt that without the slightest absurdity he could sing *Jubilate Deo* in this room like a tenor on the stage of Covent Garden. When he laid his head on the pillow life was whirling round in his brain, a wheel of coloured fire: but Connie's face had never been so dim.

The Dulford match was on the next day, and John went

down to the school ground to indulge himself in the pleasure of thinking while he watched it that this might easily be the last school match he should ever watch. He tried to beat up a little sentiment when he found himself with a large bag of cherries and a small group of friends lolling at ease in the shade of an elm-tree to watch the batting of the School Eleven.

"Oh, nicely, sir! Run it out."

"If Alan Merivale's batting comes on next year as much as it has this year, he may get his blue when he goes up to the Varsity."

"I shan't be here to see. I'm leaving school next week."

John's announcement caused a sensation. One of his friends swallowed a cherry-stone under the shock.

"Good god, Judge, you haven't been given the boot, have you?"

"No, you fat ass; I'm going to Switzerland with my governor. It was settled last night. Oh, well hit, sir! That was a damned ripping cut."

The grace of the stroke and the speed of the ball spinning over the level green toward the boundary between long slip and third man expressed his own ease of mind. That was the way *he* would be travelling presently. Could it be true? Could it really be true? Eighteen next October. It was only during the nineteenth century that such an age had come to seem young. In the past some men by eighteen had lived a fuller life than to-day most people lived by eighty. Everything to-day was directed towards retarding the few in the supposed interest of the many. The Boers were probably an unpleasant lot of Bible-thumpers, but they had a right to their own country and they were not likely to be any

pleasanter when incorporated in the British Empire. Why should the Irish be denied the right even to separate themselves absolutely from the United Kingdom if by doing so they believed they could work out their own destiny as a nation?

And why should the individual be sacrificed to the type? Why should anybody who was not eccentric and who on the whole adapted himself to the common life of a public school be compelled to endure that existence more years than were necessary because for the sake of uniformity it was agreed that the education of a schoolboy of a certain social class should last till he was eighteen, unless he chose a profession like the Navy which only relieved him of one bondage to inflict another? Well, by the fortunate whim of his father he had a chance of freedom, and if he allowed himself to be enslaved again he deserved nothing better than slavery.

Five more days of school, five more days of half-past nine to one o'clock and three o'clock to five, five more days of Greek particles and Latin deponent verbs, five more days of varnished lockers and swinging glass-doors and tickless clocks and blue sky beheld over the housetops from the windows of sunless classrooms, five more days of seeing every morning the plaster cast of Laocoön and his sons caught in the coils of the serpent and as powerless to escape as the victims of conventional education who hurried past them to hours of festering boredom, five more days of seven hundred boys, scarcely half a dozen of whom had any deeper meaning in one's life than the people in a crowded train and yet to whose prejudices and taboos and stock opinions one had submitted for nine slow years, for twenty-seven crawling terms, for

eighty-one creeping months . . . and for about two thousand five hundred dragging days.

"Are you counting Merivale's score, Judge? He must be near his fifty."

A burst of clapping from the pavilion indicated that the fifty was accomplished.

"This will be my last school match," John observed.

"You are a lucky ——!"

But the ejaculation was not uttered with any passion. It was as conventional as a New Year's greeting. They were mildly bored, yes, these people lolling under the elms and eating cherries; but give them their freedom, and they would not know what to do with it.

John sat in the shade until stumps were drawn, with St James's victorious for the first time since the summer term when John was twelve years old.

The victory gave him satisfaction, and he was a little annoyed by Fitzgerald's contemptuous reception of the news when he called at his house in Trelawny Road.

"The public-school spirit is a grand thing for the Union Jack, my boy, but as I spit on the Union Jack I don't give a twopenny damn whether the good little boys of Dulford beat the good little boys of St James's or the other way round."

"What's beating the other side got to do with the public-school spirit, you ass? I might just as well call your desire to beat England the public-school spirit."

"That's reality. Cricket is make believe."

"I shan't argue with you this afternoon, because I'm leaving school next week and going to Switzerland."

This news at any rate made a welcome impression.

"The hell you are! I wonder when we will meet again, or if we ever will meet again."

"I'm not going away for ever."

"Not in the flesh, Judge, perhaps; but when you come back you'll probably be further away from me than if you had stayed in Switzerland. I'll be having no time for cricket."

"Nor shall I."

"You'll be playing mental cricket, Judge. That's the kind I mean. I believe in two causes—my Church and my country. To both I can give something, because they are both vital. I don't need to look around for romance to spice things up. If I had lived two hundred years ago I would have been a practical Jacobite, not for the sake of any damned Stuarts, but because I should have seen in their victory the victory of my Church and the freedom of my country. What are you doing to make anything out of Jacobitism nowadays? It's just keepsake stuff. When we sing 'We are the boys of Wexford' we sing it because we are still the boys of Wexford or Wicklow or Kerry or Cork. I am determined to die for Ireland if my death will help her, and that means I probably shall die, because I know that when the test comes I shall know that if I have the courage to die Ireland will have the courage to live. But you, even if you were ready to die, could do nothing for Scotland. I'm assuming, you see, that you will presently carry your Jacobitism to the logical conclusion. Maybe I'm allowing you more intelligence than you're entitled to. Maybe you'll just potter along like old Fenwick round the corner or spend the rest of your life sitting on an addled egg. But if you do get a step nearer to reality and apply your Jacobitism practically,

you'll still never actually attain reality, because your fellow-countrymen would regard your death as an unrealistic act, and despise you as much as . . . well, perhaps not quite so much, as we Irish despise the Scotch. But, begod, Judge, why do you let me talk this damned rot? Have a good time in Switzerland. I wish you were Irish. I would have enjoyed fighting beside you one day. And I wish you were a Catholic. But that's not for selfish reasons."

John's eyelids pricked. He would have explained his emotion as an involuntary expression of sentimental regret, against which nobody was always secure. Yet when less than a month hence he lolled in the cool grass of an Alpine pasture watching the Eiger, the Mettenberg, and the Wetterhorn between him and that receding world of school the figure of Fitzgerald remained as clearly cut as those snowy peaks, as fine and predominant and complete as they were, and the thought of him on the other side of the mountains was again sharp enough to draw a tear, but it was the tear that Blake calls 'an intellectual thing.' The thought of Emil Stern on the other side of the mountains did not affect him like the thought of Fitz. Emil was as incomplete as himself, and the fancy of their joint development was sufficient to destroy the menace of separation uttered by these impassive heartbreaking mountains. With Fitz there could never again be perfect intimacy because Fitz would henceforth dwell apart within the crystal of his chosen purpose. How Emil would scoff at such a description! Petrification, he would call it, or even putrefaction! John smiled at the memory of Emil's indignation against the people who refused to welcome the twentieth century as a liberator of mankind.

"Thousands and thousands of people must be waking up every morning with a question," he had said on that evening when John had gone round to make his farewells. "And that question is 'Why, when the world is richer than it has ever been should there be a single human being without the absolute security of food and shelter?' People like that gawky Irish lout Fitzgerald annoy me. What does he expect to make of this independent Ireland? What does he want to make of it?"

"I don't think he feels it's his job to answer that question," John had replied. "His job is by action to make it possible for others to answer that question. He would argue that no nation can work out its destiny so long as it is a nation within a nation."

"We've had enough of this idiotic nationalism based on artificial geographical boundaries," Emil had declared. "The Jews have been landless for centuries, and in spite of that, in spite of being politically subject all the time, they remain the most positive expression of nationality anywhere. I have often thought that if I were a Christian my strongest argument for the divinity of Jesus Christ would be the survival of the Jews."

It had been just after Emil had said this that his mother had come in with the manuscript of John's story and invited him to go up to that grey drawing-room and hear what she thought about it.

"It's just as good as I had expected it would be, John. And just as bad," she had added quickly. "But you needn't be discouraged by that, because nobody of your age has ever succeeded in writing a really good story."

And she had criticized it in detail without in the least depressing the spirits of the author, who having outlived

the emotion which had inspired his tale already thought it preposterous.

"It's ghastly," he declared. "I can't imagine why I gave it to you to read. It's absolutely ghastly."

"It's just a dream of the night before which seems wonderful until it is told," Mrs Stern had commented. "However, as you are so well able to see that it does not convey what you intend to convey, you need not worry. The difficulty of most artists is to dissociate themselves from their work quickly enough to judge it. The original impulse which prompted them to put pen to paper or brush to canvas continues with a kind of reflex action and destroys the detachment. If ever a day should come when you re-read your own love-letters you will get the full effect of what I mean."

"You don't think there's anything in this story to show that I might some day write well?"

"Nothing at all, John. If you are an authentic poet you will, indeed you must, soon be singing a few authentic notes. It is safe to say that nobody who has not written some great poetry before he is twenty-four will ever write any great poetry. I am not aware of a single exception. On the other hand very few people have written even good prose by that age. Nobody can tell a boy of seventeen that he is likely to be a good novelist or a good dramatist or a good historian. Every boy obviously capable of imaginative development is a potential writer of prose, and the accidents of experience will determine the issue. Have you fallen in love yet?"

"I was in love when I wrote this story."

"Tell me about it. That is if you wouldn't mind."

So he had told Mrs Stern about Connie.

"And she preferred the young actor man? Poor John! But she would have been a very unnatural girl if she hadn't . . . don't look so mortified, my dear; young women of nineteen have as great a horror of making themselves look ridiculous as young men of seventeen. And your Connie couldn't have allowed herself to be enchanted by a stripling nearly two years younger than herself. Don't be afraid, John. You will never be unlucky in love, if to be lucky means to have many women falling in love with you. Whether you will be happy I will not prophesy. We shall miss you when you are gone."

A strange thing, but he could remember the exact tone in which she had made that last simple statement. And remembering it here in this flowery Alpine meadow it seemed to sound from over the other side of those mountains like a phrase of music at the end of a long piece. 'We shall miss you when you are gone.' As if with that she had quietly closed the lid of the piano.

John took from his pocket a letter he had received this morning from Mrs Stern, written with a fine hand upon crackling foreign notepaper:

'I wonder how you are enjoying Switzerland. It is to me the dreariest country in Europe, but I never came to it fresh as you have come to it with all the thrill of being abroad for the first time. I think of it in winter like a stale wedding-cake, and in summer like a soggy badly dressed salad. I abhor mountains. I abhor too the condition everybody is in of going somewhere to see something and the strictly honest predacity of the Swiss themselves. I abhor the chalets as much as I abhor the melancholy firs which provide the wood for them. And

the cuckoo clocks of Lucerne! And the cow-bells of the Rigi and the inevitable mist on Pilatus! And the German tourists with knapsacks waiting for the next boat at some lakeside jetty and the English spinsters sitting in the sun (when there is any sun) at Interlaken! Oh, and the waterfall at Mürren which was always en plus grande tenue yesterday. But perhaps the flowers have bloomed for you, John, as brightly as they bloomed for Proserpine before she was carried below by Pluto. I should like them to do that, John. I should like you to have such exquisite weather that for the rest of your life you could recapture the picture of an Alpine meadow in the sunlight, painted with flowers more prodigally than Botticelli's Primavera. My picture is of an English meadow full of buttercups and surrounded by hawthorn which I saw from the window of the train travelling down from Hull the day we landed from Poland when I was a girl. That was in 1872. I was nine years old.'

John put the letter away and turned to another written by Hetty on thick paper in her sprawling hand. No wonder there had been excess postage to pay:

'I'm rather worried about Connie. She says nothing about Arthur, but I met Ellen Fitzgerald the other day, and she told me she had heard that Arthur Dancaster had left the company. I've heard from other people how unreliable he is. Poor Connie, I'm afraid she's going to be unhappy. Ellen Fitzgerald was very excited because at last she has got a half-promise of an engagement on tour. Everything is the same as usual here. Father and Mother both ask to be remembered to you. I wonder

The Four Winds of Love

when we shall see you again, or if we ever shall see you again. If you write to Connie don't say anything about what I have told you.'

So few weeks ago, and the news in this letter of Hetty's would have agitated him intolerably. Now she and Connie and Arthur Dancaaster were so utterly lost behind these towering mountains that they meant nothing.

John walked back to the hotel where he found his father at tea on the big rustic wooden balcony surrounded by English spinsters whose looped-up skirts and straw hats tied round with grey veils showed their expeditionary status. They had in fact just returned from the ascent of the Faulhorn, a steep and a very long walk but hardly a climb, and they were still in a state of astonishment at their own daring, tired but voluble. The eminent barrister was being urged not to leave Grindelwald until he had enjoyed a comparable adventure.

"You must be able to say you've done a little mountaineering, Mr Ogilvie," one spinster was insisting as John reached the tea-table.

Two or three guides hanging about in front of the hotel were a silent reproof to his lack of initiation.

"What about the glaciers to-morrow, John?" his father asked breezily.

"Oh, you'll have to be roped for the glaciers," two spinsters ejaculated simultaneously. "We did the glaciers last year."

"I'm sure young Mr Ogilvie will enjoy that," another spinster declared. "Of course we were not roped to-day on the Faulhorn. Apparently one never is. But we started at four o'clock this morning, and I don't think you'll have to start before nine. So I'm afraid you'll miss the sunrise. And don't, please don't miss the Eismeer, the mer de glace, you know."

Alexander Ogilvie had made several attempts to tell his son about his forthcoming marriage during the various excursions they had made together on this holiday; but at the last moment he had always decided to postpone it for a more appropriate occasion. He hoped that the high solitudes about the glaciers would provide such an occasion. So they did, although not quite in the way he had expected. He and John were eating their sandwiches beside a narrow path bordered with the small crimson rhododendrons called Alpine roses. The guide was eating his lunch some yards ahead. Behind them rose the Wetterhorn. Opposite across the disappointingly dirty mass of the glacier towered the precipices of the Mettenberg and the Schreckhorn beyond, dense mist obscuring them at no great height. The day which had been clear and bright when they started had darkened over. Suddenly there was a roar from the Mettenberg which seemed to be answered from behind by another roar from the Wetterhorn.

"Avalanches," the guide observed.

The barrister asked if they were perfectly safe where they sat. The guide nodded, with a smile. A third tremendous roar sounded from the Mettenberg; plunging out of the mist, a flocculent mass of snow came drumming down the precipices.

"It is not for us," the guide assured them.

"Still, I think the weather doesn't look too good," Alexander Ogilvie insisted. "And really from where we are we can see all we want to see of the glacier."

The guide bowed politely, but in his silence there was the suggestion of a contemptuous politeness. At this moment a call came thinly up from below.

"Somebody in trouble," said Alexander Ogilvie. "You'd better go down and see what's the matter. We'll wait for you here."

The call was heard again. The guide picked up his coil of rope and set off.

"I hope it's nothing serious," John said to his father, who seemed to be looking anxiously after the figure of the guide on his way down through the Alpine roses toward the glacier, but who was saying to himself that this was the moment to tell his son what he had brought him all the way to Switzerland to tell.

"John, I want to talk to you about the future. The thing is this. Before I came away I decided to marry again."

"To marry again?" John gasped. He felt as if his father had given him a sharp push and that he had only saved himself from hurtling over the edge by a desperate effort of equilibrium.

"It's not such a very unusual step to take," Alexander Ogilvie snapped.

"No, I suppose not," John agreed in a dazed voice.

"As a matter of fact, had you seen me that night at Covent Garden you would have seen . . ." The barrister paused. It seemed ridiculous to call Elise at twenty-seven the future stepmother of a boy of seventeen. And 'my

future wife' sounded pompous. "You would have seen Elise. She is a charming young woman. Well, of course naturally I should not be proposing to marry her if she were not. She is a daughter of Sir William Hunter, one of the Lords Justices of Appeal. I know you will like her. Still, it is always difficult at first. It makes for self-consciousness. Naturally, if I had met her before . . . but it was all very sudden. I mean there was really no opportunity for you to get to know one another before we became engaged. I perfectly understand that this news may be a shock to you. Still, your mother would understand. But, as I say, I can perfectly realize that you may be surprised. And for that reason I thought you would welcome the chance of being away. I don't want you to feel bound to stay abroad for a bit, but I thought I would give you the opportunity. I'm assuming that you will go up to Oxford next year. But I wish you to choose for yourself. When you are twenty-one you will inherit your mother's money. Not a great deal. About four hundred pounds a year. Still, that means independence up to a point, and it lies with you whether you make of it the foundation for a genuine independence. Your various masters have always agreed that you had plenty of brains if you should ever make up your mind to use them. And certainly I've never found you anything except intelligent."

Alexander Ogilvie waited for his son to say something.

"Aren't you going to wish me happiness?" he asked at last when John remained silent.

"Well, of course I wish you that."

"Then do, my dear boy, try to get rid of that bewildered expression which is not very encouraging."

"It was rather a shock," John explained. "You seem so old to be marrying again."

"Old?" his father repeated indignantly. "Why, good heavens, my dear boy, I'm not so much over forty-five. Really, I did suppose you were old enough yourself by now to have some sense of proportion. I thought I'd made it clear to you lately that I no longer considered you a child. I'm really anxious that we should get to know one another. Perhaps it's mostly my fault that we don't know each other better. After your mother died I buried myself in my work. And you were too young to understand what I was feeling."

John began to behold himself like a personage in a chromolithograph . . . a chromolithographic landscape . . . a chromolithographic father and son . . . chromolithographic sentiment. . . .

The guide came back to say that an English tourist had sprained his ankle in slipping down one of the séracs on the glacier. If the *herren* were serious in not wishing to go further, would they mind his helping the other party. The path back to the hotel was unmistakable. If however they had changed their minds and now desired to complete the expedition the injured tourist could be made comfortable until help arrived.

. . . And now a chromolithographic accident, with chromolithographic mists swirling above the glacier, and an absolutely realistic rain beginning to fall. . . .

Alexander Ogilvie bade the guide go back and do what he could. The day was spoiling up here and he and the young *herr* could easily find their way home.

John was grateful for the narrowness of the path through the Alpine roses. It meant walking in single file,

and nobody can hold forth when walking in single file. By the time the path was wider the descent was much steeper, which was another impediment to anything except disjointed remarks. It was somewhat absurdly vain for his father to be huffy at his suggestion that he was too old to be marrying again.

"I'll never be a father," John vowed to himself. To spend half one's time in impressing a son how young he was compared with oneself, and the other half in trying to convince him that one was hardly older than he was, that was being a father. No thanks!

"Being a father is the most damned undignified position there is," he told himself. "Especially when a father is well known. Somebody will murder a wretched woman this summer either because in the hot weather she gets on his nerves, or because the weather is so wet that the problem of his domestic entanglements will depress him beyond bearing. Then the distinguished pleader Mr Alexander Ogilvie will be called in to charm the jury into deciding that the wretched man is innocent. Yet the distinguished pleader himself, whose fine profile and rich voice could conspire to keep a man alive, is frightened to tell his own son that he is going to marry again, so frightened that he has brought him all the way from Hampstead to the Grindelwald glaciers to reveal his secret, his chromolithographic secret. What a problem picture for the Royal Academy! The two of them sitting there among the Alpine roses, and the public guessing what they were saying to one another.

"I wish I'd seen this woman he's going to marry."

Poised upon the tussock of grass down to which he had just leapt, John looked back to where his father in a tweed

Norfolk jacket and a well-cut pair of breeches was descending more sedately the lower slopes.

"Is your future wife fair or dark?" he asked courteously.

"Elise! Elise!" his father corrected him, in the irritable voice of one who having solved a puzzle at last to his own satisfaction does not want to be reminded of his former perplexity. "For heaven's sake, my dear boy, do get into your head that she's not even ten years older than yourself."

"Well, is Elise fair or dark?"

"She's fair. Very fair in fact."

John was relieved. There would be nobody to sit in his mother's chair and perhaps at last completely obliterate the image of her he still held in his mind's eye, that image whose clarity of outline time was beginning to blur already. But if Elise was fair. . . . Elise the fair, Elise the lovable, Elise the lily maid of Astolat. Perhaps a premonition of what was to happen had made his mother read to him so often that idyll of Lancelot and Elaine.

It was raining hard now. John had bounded ahead again, and he beckoned to his father to hurry to the shelter of some spruces. As he ran wet ox-eyed daisies whipped round his ankles. Wet ox-eyed daisies? Walks with his mother through wet ox-eyed daisies in that dripping summer of 1888? Or was it 1889? He bent down to pluck one now. Just as tough as they used to seem. And that bittersweet daisy smell. And that golden smear of pollen. And she had worn a dress too of warm brown velvet embroidered on the smocked breast with yellow daisies in silk. That was still vivid in his mind's eye, though her face was growing dim. Even on memory the inanimate object made a more perdurable impression

than the most beloved human creature. Yes, that was still vivid, and vivid too the daisy pattern of the Morris wallpaper in the drawing-room of that house in Westminster, the daisy paper, and the myrtle paper on the landing outside, and the honeysuckle paper in her bedroom. But she, she was growing dim.

His father reached the shelter of the spruces.

"I'm afraid I must have sounded rather stupid up there," said John. "It was a surprise. But I do wish you happiness."

Chromolithographic speeches now.

Alexander Ogilvie shook his son's hand.

"You'll find a friend in Elise. And I'm sure you understand that I was thinking chiefly of you when I gave you this opportunity to get away from Hampstead. It's pouring. We'd better wait under these trees. I think it's only a shower. The sun's shining on the valley."

Bright as the green of a pre-Raphaelite palette . . . the Blind Girl of Millais . . . the river-banks above his Ophelia. . . .

"I thought we'd move on to Geneva to-morrow, and then look at that place near Montreux. But mind you, John, be frank about it. If you'd rather go somewhere else, say so."

At the hotel in Geneva a telegram was waiting for Alexander Ogilvie.

"Elise has to be operated upon for perityphlitis! I must get back to London at once. You can stay on in Geneva until you hear from me. We'll settle what is to be done when I get back to England. I must catch the night train. Poor child, poor child, who would have dreamt of such a disaster?"

A few hours later, John was sitting on a bench beside the silver lake, dazed by a sudden excess of freedom, with twenty pounds crackling in his pocket. He was like a character in a fairy-tale to whom a supernatural being had promised the granting of three wishes and who could not decide what he wanted. He got up and strolled along the lakeside until beneath a double line of trees heavily trimmed in the continental fashion to form an overarching canopy he saw chairs and tables set out, none of them occupied. John took a seat at one of the tables. Presently a waiter came out of a small café on the other side of the road to attend to his commands. In the self-consciousness of youth John ordered the first drink with a familiar name on the list of beverages. It happened to be maraschino. The pleasure of being able to sit at ease beside the moonlit lake of Geneva and order what he liked to drink was slightly marred by the syrupy liqueur he had chosen, which tasted like glycerine decanted from a bug-hunter's poison-bottle. He began to fancy that the waiter was laughing at him, and defiantly called for a second glass of the sickly stuff fit for nothing except to counteract the acid of fruit. He liked the second glass no better than the first, but in order to impress on the waiter how well he was accustomed to sitting like this under the trees and contemplating over maraschino the murmurous promenaders of a summer's night, he called for a third glass. The world expanded. The nocturnal sky deepened to a richer sapphirine. The mountains on the other side of the silver lake were floating toward the moon. The passers-by bent over to one another in their sauntering to speak the words that poets

give to lovers. The very arc-lamps along the boulevard fizzed melodiously, and the waiter's napkin and apron were draperies better graced than by the marble of Praxiteles. Three glasses of maraschino had set the world in John's hand like a king's orb. He waved his sceptre—a wangee cane—to the waiter, and in a mood of profound magnanimity, of infinite benevolence, with a head as light as a moth, he wandered off. Presently a tall dark woman who had been leaning idly over the parapet along the lake perceived the slim figure in grey flannel and came undulating towards him.

“Bon soir, ma petite poupée d'amour,” she began.

But John was alarmed by this Lilith in sequins and seeing a large well-lighted building opposite he hurried across the road and passed into what proved to be the Kursaal. Catching sight of himself in a wide mirror on the wall of the entrance lobby, he stopped in surprise to observe what he could not but think was the extraordinary advance he had made since he had put the Channel between him and school. To himself he admitted that Bunting's well-cut flannel suit and Henry Heath's light grey Trilby hat were chiefly responsible for this magnificently worldly appearance. In those days what was called most politely the Homburg hat, more vulgarly the Trilby, and most vulgarly something else, at once differentiated the wearer of it in England from the respectable bourgeois who never wore anything except a bowler or straw hat on week-days and a top-hat on Sundays. Certainly, the Prince of Wales often wore a Homburg hat, but such headgear on his royal head was associated with baccarat in the minds of his mother's middle-class admirers. That every suburban corner-boy would be wearing such a hat twenty years

hence was then no more imaginable than the bathing-undresses of the future.

The combination of three maraschinos with the effect of the Trilby hat observed in the mirror, and a slight feeling that his running away from the woman in sequins had been a cowardly piece of boyishness, determined John to be as grown-up as he looked. Money was crackling in his pocket. This was the moment to gamble. He watched for awhile the players round the *petits chevaux*. It did not seem a difficult game. The man next him had put down three five-franc pieces running on the even numbers and won fifteen francs. John flung down a five-franc piece on the odd numbers. 'Cinq!' John, who was expecting to receive five francs saw his money raked in by the croupier, and not only his money but all the money on the table except what actually stood in the square marked with a five. By the time John had discovered that five was the bank's number, a kind of super-zero, he had got rid of all his small cash. This was the moment when the strong-minded gambler went home, and John was very nearly weak enough to be strong-minded. Then he pulled himself together. He was abroad. He was his own master. He had more money in his pocket than he had ever had in his life. What were the seventeen francs he had lost? Unlucky in love, lucky at cards. He went over to the cashier's desk and changed a five-pound note for twenty-five yellow counters and some insignificant pieces of silver and copper. It was as easy as Tiddleywinks to play with counters. One had more courage for staking. Indeed, John had so much courage that in ten minutes every single yellow counter had vanished. The next twenty-five lasted longer. At one time

they had become as many as fifty-four, and then he made the mistake of counting up how much he had won. That brought the inevitable bad luck, and it was necessary to change his third five-pound note, because it would be silly to go away and leave the damned bank two hundred and sixty francs the better of him. The new set of counters vanished with absurd rapidity owing to the unprecedented run on the even numbers. That could not happen again. John changed his last five-pound note. Just as he had expected, the odd numbers were asserting themselves. Moreover, he managed to choose the very moment to change and back the even numbers again. He must have almost won back his third five-pound note, but he would not make the mistake of counting this time. He heard a woman next him at the table whisper to her companion:

"Regarde, chérie, le petit auprès de moi. Il a l'air d'un gosse qu'on régale avec des bonbons. Regarde ses grands yeux bleus. Il est joli comme un amour."

John turned round to show a scowl of disapproval at the utterer of this objectionable gush.

"Regarde, regarde!" she urged her companion, with a ripple of merriment, "veux-tu regarder l'homme sauvage?"

John flamed at this badinage from a woman he suspected of being a tart. In trying to concentrate more intensely upon the whirling horses to protect his dignity, he found he had inadvertently left a counter on the seven, which won and set him on the way to winning back his second five pounds. He had not hitherto been backing single horses, but now that his luck had turned this was obviously the policy to pursue. He pursued it, and was very soon deep into his last five pounds. This made him cautious again, and for ten minutes he fought a losing

battle with the odd and even numbers. At last he was left with a single yellow counter. He placed it on the seven. Seven was his lucky number. The mistake he had made was in not sticking to seven all the time. He might have doubled his capital by now. With forty pounds he could really begin to live.

"Huit!"

John walked out of the Kursaal. In going in he had noticed his flushed complexion and wondered if it was not a little on the girlish side. No need to bother about that any longer. He was now as pale as Hamlet. And his lips were trembling in a most disconcerting way. Thank heaven he was entirely alone and out of reach of sympathy. To-morrow he would have to use the five or six francs left to send a telegram to his father. Or would it be in the tradition to go boldly back into the Kursaal and stake them in a last desperate throw on seven? But an end had come to John's sense of controlling the world. In fact he could not sleep for a long time, wondering all the while as he turned over and over in his hotel bed whether six francs and twenty centimes would pay for a telegram to London. An optimistic solution finally presented itself and allowed him to rest. He would summon up enough sang-froid in the morning to ask the head-waiter to send the telegram and put it down on the bill. Then he began to spend the money he would have won if he had only stuck to the seven, and in this agreeable mental occupation he fell asleep.

To John's relief next morning the hotel porter did not seem to expect payment for the telegram:

*When you write please send twenty pounds money
unfortunately lost*

John decided that the adverb 'unfortunately,' adequate though it was as a qualification of the verb 'lost,' had better be amplified in a letter. He decided at the same time that the wisest amplification would be the exact truth.

It was on Wednesday when John sent off the telegram. He might reasonably expect an answer by Friday, and at the latest by Saturday. With only six francs and twenty centimes in his pocket he was unable to do anything more exciting than walk about Geneva and smoke not too many cigarettes. Geneva at this date could claim to be the dulllest city of its size in Europe, and that John should have managed to find it a step in the conventional rake's progress was remarkable. However, his wandering about undistinguished architecture and dreary museums took him no farther along the primrose path that week. There was no letter on Friday. That was perhaps to be expected. There was no letter on Saturday or Sunday either, and when on Monday the hotel porter told him there was still no letter John fancied that there was a suspicious gleam in the porter's bilious eyes. Tuesday found John without a letter and without a sou in his pockets. The porter's information on Wednesday that there was still no letter seemed to possess menacing curtness, and when John went up to his room before lunch his apprehensions of unpleasantness were intensified by seeing on his dressing-table the bill for the week:

<i>Pension</i>	56.00
<i>Telegramme</i>	8.50
	<u>64.50</u>

Sixty-four francs! The spidery writing made him feel

more than ever that he was caught in an inescapable web. Sixty-four francs! Lunch was flavourless: the afternoon walk round Geneva was more depressing than ever. Sixty-four francs! All the faces of head-porters seemed puckered with appraising greed, but the face of the head-porter at the Hotel X—— was the most coldly acquisitive of any. When John was wandering around out of doors the ordeal of passing his desk on the way into the hotel again became an obsession, and when on Friday the porter anticipated his question by informing him that there was no letter for him, John was convinced by the tone of his voice that he was being regarded as an impostor. This conviction was strengthened by the attitude of the manager, a small man with sandy hair in a frock-coat much too large for him.

“Good morning, Mistaire Ogilvie.”

“Good morning.”

“Pardon, but the account was in order, yes?”

“Quite in order.”

“Thank you. I was just wishing to know, not for to trouble you.”

It was all very well for that sandy-haired little brute to rub his hands and smirk and bow like that, but why ask about those sixty-four francs unless he was getting anxious about them? What on earth could his father mean by not sending the money? Perhaps he would have been wiser to invent a story about the lost twenty pounds, instead of telling the truth.

Saturday arrived. There was still no letter. John had begun to feel by now that all the employees of the hotel were aware of his pennilessness. The chambermaid appeared to bustle round his room with a petticoat-

swishing contempt for its occupant. The valet gave the impression of dropping his boots outside his door as if he were flinging stones at a beggar. The waiter seemed to serve him long after everybody else and to bring him the least appetizing portions. Even the pageboy, whose job it was to open the door for outgoing and incoming guests managed, to John's fancy, to open the door for himself with a suggestion of insolence. By Tuesday evening he knew that he could not face the presentation of the second week's bill on Wednesday morning. He made up his mind after dinner to go out and not return to the hotel.

It was not so bad the first night. The weather was warm and fine. John had eaten a good dinner in spite of the imagined inattention of the waiter. He dozed fitfully on one of the benches beside the lake after he had tired himself out by walking about for hours. It was less pleasant in the morning to wake up feeling grubby and stiff, and by the afternoon when hunger had been added to grubbiness and stiffness it was definitely unpleasant, so unpleasant that he felt inclined to brave the looks of the manager and the staff and return to the hotel. By dusk the thought of dinner and bed was overwhelming; but he resisted the impulse to surrender, and walked about again until he was sufficiently exhausted to sit down on a bench and fall asleep. He woke at dawn grubbier, stiffer, hungrier, and cold now into the bargain, for a chill wind was blowing across the lake from the mountains. By eight o'clock it was raining. It was too early to find shelter in one of the museums. He decided to go to church. The first church he tried was locked up. So was the second. The third was a Catholic church in which Mass

was being said. The congregation was made up of poor people. Thirty-six hours without food or bed had reduced John to a condition in which he could learn his first real lesson in humility. Hitherto he had pitied poor people because they lacked something material he himself possessed. Now sitting in grubbiness, stiffness, hunger and cold, he envied them their possession of something spiritual which he lacked. He wished he could share in this worship. He wished he understood what the faint click and tinkle of the rosaries signified, what the mysterious gestures and movements before the altar signified. A compelling conviction that he was nearer than he had ever been to truth struck him sharply. It was a positively physical experience like being stabbed by a dagger. Never once before had a religious service or ceremony affected him with the sense that behind it was reality. 'Going to church had been like going to school, a disciplinary demand made upon one's freedom for the sake of a theoretical benefit. Religious instruction had been a part of the hebdomadal round like Roman history or the gymnasium. Now in this dingy church smelling of damp stone and damp people, of stale incense, wax-candles and dusty draperies, he found added to his bodily hunger a hunger of the mind. Those who have experienced hunger know that the bitterest pang is caused not by the sight or smell of food, but by the sight of other people eating. It is this which rouses anger and despair at what seem the irrational conditions of material existence. John had already been tormented by the cruel absurdity of watching people eat merely because they had in their pockets a few pieces of metal which he lacked. He was now tormented by the thought of his exclusion from the

intimacy of this common worship. He was in a state of which a less scrupulous, or if that may sound uncharitable, of which a less cynical organization than the Catholic Church would have taken advantage. He would have been considered ripe for an emotional conversion, and would have been offered the blood of the Lamb in which to bathe with as much hospitable assurance as if the blood of the Lamb could be turned on like the tap of a hot bath. The impersonal aspect of this uncomprehended Mass which was being muttered by an unshaven priest on a chilly summer morning in Geneva, in that city which had inflicted more emotional plagues on the world than any other, gave to John nothing more than a sense of exclusion; but because thereby it created a spiritual and intellectual hunger which was to be associated in the future with the bodily hunger of these anxious days that impersonal Mass was marked indelibly upon his mind. The question John asked himself this morning would not be answered yet; but the question had been asked. A complete indifference to religion was never to be his again: God had troubled his curiosity. But being what in the jargon of the years to come was to be called an extrovert John did not search within himself to gratify that curiosity.

When the congregation had dispersed, save for two or three old women kneeling upon the stones in pious colloquy with statue or picture, John sat on in the church. What on earth was he going to do? For the first time he realized the stupidity of walking out of the hotel like that in an access of self-consciousness. If he went back to it now, battered by these two nights in the open air, the head-porter's suspicious eyes would glint more suspiciously than ever. Of course, if a letter had arrived for

him it would not matter. The porter could look as suspicious as he liked. Who would care, with twenty pounds in his pocket again?

The stillness and comparative warmth of the church soothed John's worries. He fell asleep. It was nearly noon when he woke. He looked at his silver wrist-watch. Would anybody in this city of watchmakers lend him enough on the security of the watch to send another telegram to his father? Probably nobody. The watch had cost only twenty-five shillings when new.

"Quelle heure est-il, monsieur, s'il vous plaît?"

John turned round with a start to see a peaked little woman on the line of seats behind him.

"Onze heures cinquante."

"Halloa! Why, you're English. Fancy me asking for the time in French! Well, I do call that laughable."

The Cockney voice was as refreshing as water. John grinned.

"I say, you haven't half been snoozing for the last half-hour," the little woman chirped on. "Muttering to yourself too, you was, once or twice. I was in two minds whether I wouldn't give you a poke in the back with my umbrella. You know. I thought you might have been having a nasty dream or something. I remember I dreamt once a gentleman friend of mine whose teeth was always a bit too much in the middle of the front door started growing tusks and sprung at me as savage as a rhinoceros. Scream? Yes, I did scream. Well, the landlady thought it was Jack the Ripper come back. And what do you think the old cow did? Why, got inside of her own wardrobe. Oh, yes, I might have been murdered twice over before *she* was going to do anything about it.

Still and all, that dream was a warning, because this gentleman friend of mine pinched three pounds twelve and six out of my make-up box, and which was what I'd put by for my poor old mother. What a rotter, eh? Well, they say it takes all sorts to make up this world, and I reckon they're right."

John, thinking this flow of reminiscence was not the most suitable kind of conversation for the inside of a church, suggested to his neighbour that they should go outside and talk.

"All right. Only I want to light a few candles for St Anthony first. Fancy, I left my bag in a shop the day before yesterday, and I couldn't think where I *had* left it. I thought one of the girls in the pension had pinched it. I was nearly potty. Well, I mean to say, look what was in it. All I've got in the world you might say. It wasn't so much the money, though there was over a hundred francs; but there was all the words of my songs, and two bits that was written about me in the newspaper once, and my poor old mother's wedding-ring, and her rosary, and a bottle of scent which a fellow gave me in Lyons for the way I danced the cakewalk last winter and which I said I wouldn't open not till I was back in dear old England, and so this bottle of scent became a kind of something kept for luck and I wouldn't have lost it not for anything. Well, when I couldn't find my bag I was nearly barmy. Talk about the rats—well, I had the rats all that night, and that's a fact. And all yesterday I was looking for this bag of mine and praying to St Anthony, and I didn't like to borrow the money to light some candles for him then because . . . well, I don't know, he mightn't have liked it. I mean to say he might have thought they weren't really

my candles at all in a manner of speaking. Well, I came in here yesterday afternoon about six and told him all my troubles and suddenly, biff! Well, if he'd have leant over and said, 'You left your bag when you went in to ask the price of that cock's-feather boa, you silly coughdrop,' I couldn't have had it from him straighter. So just half a tick, for me to light some candles for him and say an Our Father and three Hail Marys."

To John's relief the flow of chatter ceased for a moment while the peaked little woman, whose small scarlet hat and dark blue coat and skirt braided with scarlet gave her a semi-military look like a *vivandière* in a comic opera, hurried away to express her gratitude to that mighty young Franciscan who had been dead nearly seven hundred years. Again, as John saw the little woman kneeling in the dimness beyond at the feet of the benign figure, he was stabbed by truth. He was as much awed by the serenity and intensity of those twelve flames lighted by that little woman as a child by the illumination of a Christmas tree.

"Here, you didn't get any holy water," said the little woman, as they came out of the church into the rain.

"I'm not a Roman Catholic."

"Fancy, and yet you went in there. Oh well, I expect you think it's a comical business. I had a girl friend like you who I took with me to Mass once. And what a set out it was! She got the giggles. And if she didn't properly show me up. I had to take her out by the arm. I think it was the crossing at the Gospel tore it. 'Oo-er,' she said, just like that. And then she came over purple in the face and I got her outside as soon as the Creed started. We had quite an argument about it on the way

back to the digs. It was when I was in panto in Liverpool. 'Well,' I said, 'that's the last time, Florrie,' I said, 'I'll let you make a poppy-show out of me like you did this morning,' I said. But she was a very young girl anyway. Florrie Cremer was her name. She was mashed on the fellow who played the drum at the Princess's. And I said 'Yes, you watch out, my girl,' I said, 'or he'll start in playing the drum on you.' So he did too, the dirty rotter, and him a married man. And somebody told Florrie if she took a G nib and dipped it in peroxide she could unload her packet of trouble. So she had a try and gave herself peritunitis and died before they could get her to hospital. What advice to give a poor girl, eh? Florrie Cremer. She was a pretty girl with dimples. My name's Cissie Oliver. What's yours? John Ogilvie? I suppose they call you 'Jack.' No? John, do they? Sounds a bit solemn to my taste. Let's split the diff, and make it 'Johnnie' between we two. And Ogilvie, eh? The only time I ever saw that name was in Birmingham. There was a hairdresser called Ogilvie where we bought our grease-paint. That was when I was in panto at the old Grand three years running. Oliver and Ogilvie. Sounds like a double trapeze act. But, fancy, you don't often get two O's except in old Ireland, do you? I'll bet that means something if anyone only knew what it was. Change the name and not the letter, change for the worse and not the better. So you needn't be afraid of me trying to marry you." Miss Oliver laughed shrilly, and then turned round to look up at her companion's face to see how he was enjoying her humour. "I say, you don't half look pale, Johnnie. What's the matter with you? I'll lay you was out on the tiles last night. Naughty boy. No,

without a joke, you ought to be careful with the girls in a goody-goody hole like Geneva. That's just the place you'll get the kind of applause nobody wants. Excuse my French."

John's seventeen-year-old pride could not hold out. He confided in Miss Oliver the tale of his misfortunes, she listening the while without interruption and looking like an extremely sympathetic rat, with her thin nose too big for her peaked face, her bright restless dark eyes, and her sharply retreating chin.

Only when the recital was finished did Miss Oliver become voluble again.

"Lost twenty spondulicks at those *petits chevaux*? And I'll lay you're not hardly nineteen yet?"

John smiled wanly. Grubby, stiff, hungry, cold, damp and penniless as he was, to be mistaken for over a year more than his actual age could still give him pleasure.

"It's nothing to laugh about," Miss Oliver continued. "I'd have called you a juggins if you'd have spent twenty soverings on a girl; but you *could* have gone to bye-bye with her unless she was a more unnatural bitch than what I've met yet. And I've met some. But twenty pounds on horses! And them toy ones! Why, they've shut people up for life in Bedlam for acting less silly than that. And what did you want to leave your hotel for? Because the porter looked at you! If I'd have walked out of every digs and pension where the old tear that owned them looked at me, I'd have been walking on my —— for years, and even what little behind I have got wouldn't be there by now. You want to look back when anybody looks at you, Johnnie. Here, I'll tell you what, we'll go round and talk to this porter of yours. If I can't make the —— blush in

English, French, and German I'm no longer Cissie Oliver."

"But suppose there's still no letter from my father?"

"Then you must send him another telegram, silly boy."

"But I haven't got a sou."

"But I found my bag, didn't I?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"And didn't you hear me tell you there was a hundred francs in it?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"Oh, for the love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph stop saying 'but', if you don't want to give me the willies. Haven't I left twelve candles burning in front of St Anthony? What do you think I'd feel like next time I went to ask his help if I let myself be butted out of giving a helping hand myself? Bread and butter's what you want, Johnnie-Head-in-the-Air, not bread and butts. Next thing is you'll be too proud to come into this café and let me do the ordering because my French is better than yours. Are you too proud, eh?"

"No, I'm not," said John. "I'm dashed grateful."

She saw that his mouth was twitching and hurried in to the café ahead of him, to find a table in a corner.

When the meal was over, Cissie Oliver passed a golden coin to John under the table.

"You pay," she urged. "You can pay me back when you get your money. Don't overtip the waiter. Forty centimes is quite enough. They don't think any more of you in this country for pitching money about for nothing. That's the mistake English people always make when they go abroad. It's conceit, really. Give the poor bloody foreigner something to teach him to reckonize his betters."

"You know the Continent very well," John observed.

"Know the Continent well? I ought to. I started being sick into the Channel over twelve years ago. I'm thirty-two now. I've sung and danced in café concerts all over France. I've travelled with a circus in France and Spain. I've been through Germany and Austria with a dancing troupe. I even got to Constantinople once. What a dog's island! Talk about Abanazar the Wicked Uncle. The fellow who ran the café concert in Constantinople was a regular Abanazar all right, with a hat on his head like a kid's pail and a moustache like a horseshoe. What d'ye think I found when I went up to my room in the pension the first night? Why him! And in my bed. Took me for granted, you might say. I just looked at him for a minute, and then I threw the toilet-jug at him. 'You can sleep with that,' I said, 'you'll find it warmer than what I am'. And with that I left him and went to sleep with a Russian girl called Sonia. Oh, of course I had the sack, but an English fellow lent me the money to get to Vienna, and so it all came out in the wash. Oh, I've had a lot of adventures. The only thing is I worry a bit sometimes about what's going to happen one day. I sometimes think I'd be wise to stay in England. And yet except for panto where's a girl like me going to get a shop? It isn't as if I had a home. My old mother was the last. When she went I was all alone. I've often thought I'd like to save money enough to take a little shop in a country town. Sweets and what not. Tobacco too, and perhaps papers. That way one would always have somebody to talk to, and I must talk. But come on, we'd better go and see about this letter of yours. I suppose you never tried any of the

other hotels. Your dad might have made a mistake in the address."

And this was exactly what Alexander Ogilvie had done. It was necessary, however, to go to the Hotel X—— for evidence that John was the person he claimed to be.

The manager was inclined to be disobliging at first, but John's new friend was too much for him.

"You call yourself the manager of a hotel, yes," she pointed out to him. "But how you got a job outside of the lift would take some guessing, for you haven't got the brains to do more than press a button and leave the rest to the lift. Fancy not thinking to enquire at another hotel. I suppose you think this is the only hotel in Geneva. Well, I grant you Geneva's a one-horse hole of a town, but it's not quite bad enough for yours to be the only hotel in it. Now, don't start waving your hands at me, but put your hat on that foxy head of yours and come round and explain to the manager of the Hotel Y—— about this letter. That is if you want your bill paid. If you don't, kindly have this monsieur's luggage brought down and we'll leave without paying."

"Très bien, madame. Je vous accompagnerai."

The letter from John's father was not exhilarating. True, it enclosed some money, but little more than enough to pay John's hotel bill and his second-class fare back to London.

"Your letter from Geneva came as a great shock," the barrister had written, "*worried as I was by the illness of Elise, though I'm thankful to say the operation was successful and she is on a fair road to recovery, I should have been spared the worry of your behaviour. Even if the money was lost entirely in gambling, you have shown me that you are quite*

unfit to be trusted abroad on your own. We had better give up the notion of your staying with a family in France or Switzerland. I can hardly send you back to school next term, though I suppose that is what I should do. I must make enquiries about some private tutor somewhere in the country where you can spend the next year out of mischief. The postponement of my marriage owing to this unfortunate illness of Elise means that I shall be at home for the present. You can return at once."

"I suppose I ought to go back to-night," said John gloomily. Now that he had some money Geneva was becoming attractive again.

"Oh, not to-night," Cissie Oliver protested. "I wanted you to hear my show to-night. When was the letter from your dad sent off? more than a week ago? Well, one day won't make any odds. You can show him his mistake on the envelope. He can't say anything."

For two or three minutes, while the wine he and his guest had drank at dinner was still potent and when she had gone off to prepare herself for the evening's entertainment at the Café Concert Etoile, John debated with himself the possibility of a return visit to the Kursaal in an attempt to win back what he had lost on that first fatal visit, and perhaps even win more besides. Suppose he should begin by playing with single francs, determined to come away as soon as he had lost twenty—the maximum he could afford? There would be no risk in that. Suppose this were his lucky night? He might not lose a franc. He would soon know. It was an established fact that you should always play up your luck. But would he have the strength of mind to play no more if he lost the first twenty francs? He should have given Cissie (a pity such a good sort should be called Cissie) the balance of his money.

Then he would have *had* to stop at twenty francs if he had gone back to the Kursaal . . . if . . . if . . . if he won forty pounds he could make a present of half to Cissie. She had said how much she wanted to see the Paris Exhibition. He could go back to England through France, and they could visit the Exhibition together. Then the recollection of those two nights in the open intervened. He would not run the risk of repetition. For many years to come John was to blame the cautious decision he took that summer evening in 1900 for every surrender he made thereafter to prudence and common sense, those two withered virgins of the moral code.

The Etoile was a somewhat dingy little café close to one of the quays of the Rhône. It was frequented for the most part by *petits bourgeois*, small shopkeepers and their wives, bank clerks and their sweethearts, and an occasional foreigner desperately trying to find a little gaiety in Geneva. Here and there on the walls hung a printed placard begging frequenters to renew their *consommations* once an hour. The proprietor had grown tired of providing an evening's amusement for parsimonious clients at the price of a cup of coffee or a small bock. At the far end of the room beyond the closely packed marble-topped tables at which the clients sat was a small platform which served as stage. On the right of this was a rickety Erard piano, at which in a decayed evening-dress sat the accompanist, a pallid thin tuberculous-looking young man who was never without a Caporal cigarette between his lips except when he drank the health of some visitor who had stood him a bock. Behind the piano a stained and faded cretonne curtain veiled the performers from the eyes of

the audience when they wanted to change their clothes or their make-up.

The array of artistic talent was not brilliant; but the worst of French performers of this kind are better than the best of British. The favourite was a tall and buxom blonde in a very low black *décolleté* who, Cissie Oliver informed John, had two years ago been a chambermaid in a St Malo hotel. She was not much over twenty, and with a little luck in catching the eye of the right man, Odette might reach Paris in time.

"Well, she has life," declared Cissie, who in a Spanish costume down to the knees was seated with John at the table nearest to the pianist. "Look at her now, I mean."

Odette was singing a song, the refrain of which was:

*"Assez de bicyclette, de bicyclette, de bicyclette!
Moi, je préfère la brouette, la brouette, la brouette,
On pousse de temps en temps,
C'est un mouvement épatant."*

The singer's proclamation that she preferred a wheelbarrow to a bicycle was received with that frank Gallic mirth which at this date was forbidden to merry England.

"Of course, if you understood French really well, you'd understand what they're laughing at," Cissie observed. "You see . . . oh, well, I don't think I'll explain the joke . . . it would just sound nasty in English."

"Viens ici, Odette," she called presently to the singer, who had sprung down from the stage to loud applause. The tall blonde came and sat down genially at their table.

"Je te présente monsieur John Ogilvie. Il est anglais."

"Ça se voit," said Odette. "Pourtant il est gentil, n'est-

ce pas? Enchantée, monsieur." The big blonde extended her black-gloved hand.

"Je ne suis pas anglais," said John a little stiffly. "Je suis écossais."

He had learnt that in France at any rate there was still a difference, and in these days of the Boer War when the Fashoda incident was not forgotten the difference counted for much.

"Are you really Scotch?" exclaimed Cissie. "Well, I can't say I ever liked a Scotchman before I met you."

"Mince alors! Ne parlez pas anglais, ou je file," Odette cried.

"Pardon, chérie," the English girl said. Then she leant over to John and whispered to him to offer Odette a *flûte*.

"A what?" John gasped in alarm.

"A glass of champagne. It'll only cost you a franc."

John reddened. He thought that Cissie was adapting the situation to his national character.

"Garçon," he called grandly, "apportez trois verres de champagne."

"Trois flûtes, Philippe," Cissie supplemented.

The tall thin glasses of very sweet champagne arrived, and the three pledged one another.

"Dis donc, Ceecee," Odette demanded, "le petit est ton caprice, hein?"

"Non, non, blagueuse, il est trop jeune."

"Il n'est pas du tout trop jeune. Je pourrais coucher avec lui . . . tu sais, Ceecee, quand on est jeune comme ça on fait l'amour. . . ." She kissed the tips of her fingers for a superlative.

"Ferme-la," Cissie scolded.

John was by now blushing deeply, to Odette's delight.

"Regarde, regarde," she cried in an ecstasy, "il rougit. Non, sans blague, Ceecee, s'il ne te fait pas peine je voudrais bien qu'il couche avec moi cette nuit."

The English girl frowned disapproval at Odette; but at this moment she was called upon to sing her first song, which proved to be 'Just a little bit of string', given in a small breathless voice and with a queer mechanical coyness. The song was followed by a dance, which was not without a certain grace.

"Elle est gentille, la petite Ceecee," Odette decided. "Mais je ne trouve pas, moi, qu'elle chante bien. Qu'est-ce que veut dire, 'Jost a leetle beet of strring'?"

John's forehead was puckered in an attempt to translate.

"Seulement un petit morceau de corde."

"Comment?" Odette exclaimed in blank astonishment. Then suddenly her expression melted into mirthful comprehension. "Ah, je comprends. C'est sale, hein?" Delighted with having as she supposed discovered the bawdy allusion, she dashed across to the pianist and explained the point of Cissie's song to him.

"Pas vrai!" the pianist exclaimed with a laugh.

"Oui, je te jure, Le p'tit copain de Ceecee m'a fait comprendre à merveille. Oh, shockink! Oh, shockink!"

The *grivois*, an elderly man with the conventional clown's make-up of the French comic singer, was the next to be informed of the hidden meaning of 'Just a little bit of string', and within a few minutes everybody in the café was shouting 'Jost a leetle beet of strring, Meess.'

The English performer came down from the stage in some bewilderment to be greeted by Odette with her interpretation.

"You told her it meant that?" she said to John.

"I don't know what on earth they're all talking about," replied John in bewilderment. "She asked me to translate 'Just a little bit of string', and I suppose I made some mistake in the French."

"That's allright. It's the dirty minds these French people have. But, look here, don't you let Odette lead you astray. She's a nice girl, but she's not the kind of girl for you."

Odette was by now on the stage again singing:

*"Puisqu' entre nous tout est fini,
Disons adieu, mon gro bébé.
Nous avons bien aimé,
L'un l'autre, toi et moi,
Donne-moi tes beaux yeux
Que je les baise . . ." etc, etc.*

The English are conservative in politics and food; the French are conservative in everything except politics and food, and in nothing more conservative than in light entertainment. Songs like that sung by Odette this summer evening in 1900 would be heard over the wireless every evening thirty-five years later. Another thirty-five years hence a poet may celebrate some *chanteuse* as Keats the nightingale for her changeless song. John at his age lacked the experience to determine why the banal words of Odette's lays should affect him with a sense of permanent and profound emotion, whereas when a few minutes later Cissie Oliver was singing:

*"What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't love you?
What is the use of loving a girl
When you know she don't want you to?
What if she's fair beyond all compare,
And what if her eyes are blue?
What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't want you to?"*

the equally banal words should affect him with a sense of tawdry and superficial emotion which when the novelty of its expression was trite would be merely funny. Moreover, the warmth of the French girl's singing, just as conventional of course as the kittenish manner of the English girl, had such ease of technique that art concealed itself and John's pulses began to race in response to the directness of the passionate appeal she seemed to be making to him.

"Dis, chéri, tu veux faire l'amour avec moi?" Odette's husky whisper fluttered in his ear when she came to sit beside him during Cissie Oliver's turn. And then with that frankness of physical relish which of Western women only a Frenchwoman dares to use in speaking of love without dread of disgusting the more fastidious male, Odette murmured her invitation to enchantment like Circe and Calypso once upon a time. Beyond and above her low melodious husky voice, sounded thinly:

*"What is the use of loving a girl
If the girl don't want you to?"*

"Listen, you silly boy, if you let Odette take you home with her I'll really be angry. Not that she isn't a good sort. It isn't for any harm you'd come to. But I properly sized you up this morning, and you don't know where to stop. That's your trouble. You've got to go back home, or your Par'll get nasty. I could tell that by the letter he wrote you. You don't want to be stuck again like you was over *petits chevaux*. Go on now, Johnnie, and be a sensible boy, or else you'll make me sorry I didn't push you off by the night train."

John smiled at her. The condition of destitute misery

in which he had made her acquaintance in the church that morning was already growing so remote that the notion of being pushed off by this little woman so much more like a nursery governess than an actress set up a comic picture in his mind. She mistook the cause of his smile.

"Oh, you needn't think I'm jealous. It never entered my head you might take a fancy to *me* in that way. Well, any decent English girl wouldn't. Only you can't expect a French girl to look at it the same way as us. Well, they're brought up different for one thing. But, Johnnie, I do beg you to go home quietly and not let me think I've led you astray."

John in spite of the growing remoteness of his misfortunes did feel grateful to Cissie Oliver—but oh, why was she called Cissie?—and he would have liked to show his gratitude by behaving with the decorum and prudence she demanded; but Odette was now slowly pacing the stage to a lilting air in the words of which play was made with various flowers:

*"Le lys chez les réactionnaires,
Le . . . something not caught . . . chez les généraux,
Les œillets chez les corsetières. . . ."*

and as the tall blonde every time she turned threw back at him over her shoulder a glance which was the most intoxicating mixture of challenge, mischief, schoolgirl humour, gaminerie, espièglerie, and downright unashamed sensuality, John determined, whatever the cost, to accept the invitation should it prove to be serious and not a piece of devilment at his expense.

If anything had been needed to spur his determination,

it had been supplied by the attempt of one of Odette's admirers to secure her favours for this very night. As she sprang down from the stage a clean-shaven raffish young man, who had entered the café during her last song and, after greeting the proprietor, made his way across to the corner where the performers sat, caught Odette by the wrist and spoke to her.

"That's her fancy boy," Cissie told John. "He's been away for a week. I reckon she'll have to take him back with her to-night," she added with relief.

But apparently Odette was not of that opinion. She had shaken off the man's grasp, and for answer to his angry protest was now laughing with that maddening insolence which Odettes can always command. John could not make out what she said in answer to her lover's second protest; but presently she swept him aside contemptuously and came back to the table at which she had been sitting with John and Cissie Oliver. The consumptive pianist dropped his chin in a droll grimace, and with a malicious eye watched over the top of his instrument the discomfited suitor standing in evident perplexity at the attitude of a young woman by whom he had expected to be gratefully welcomed. Then the pianist turned to Odette, eyebrows raised in a question.

"Il m'agace, mon cher, il m'emmerde," Odette called over to him, loudly enough for the suitor to overhear.

Cissie whispered across the table that how stupid it was of her to be so rude to a man who might pay her out the first time she gave him an opportunity.

"Je m'en fous," Odette scoffed, and having thus tersely disposed of the suitor she shouted to the waiter to bring a round of flûtes with a bock for the pianist; but when John

was going to pay she shook her head and signed to the waiter that the drinks were on her. The suitor departed, bile in his parting glance.

Cissie Oliver sighed. She had never before seen Odette stand drinks like this. It would be idle to fight against the situation which she herself had brought about. It was wrong, no doubt, for a boy of Johnnie's age and in Johnnie's position to be having an affair with a girl like Odette. Still, Odette was mashed on him. She had made it clear to her that Johnnie had very little money. If only the kid didn't go and get potty on Odette. She was a good-looking girl. No mistake about that. Just the girl who would excite a kid like Johnnie. And she had a jolly fine figure too. No mistake about that. You couldn't blame a kid for getting a bit excited when a girl like Odette made it so obvious that he'd properly caught her eye. No use in getting annoyed about it. Odette would only think she was jealous. And that might make her nasty.

"Well, I suppose you two love-birds want to go to your nest," she said when the concert was over and the café was nearly empty.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? Lovebairds?" Odette asked.

The little English woman explained.

"Vraiment elle est gentille, la p'tite Ceecee," Odette declared, with an affectionate smile. "Alors, tu viens, Jean?"

"Let's meet for déjeuner to-morrow," John suggested to Cissie. "Come round to my hotel at one o'clock, will you?"

Odette frowned.

"À une heure? Ah, mais oui, j'ai bien compris." She whispered something to the Englishwoman.

"You are the limit, Odette!"

"Hein?"

"Tu es terrible. She says if I meet you at five o'clock that will be time enough," Cissie explained to John.

"Yes, but I shall be wanting lunch by one o'clock," John insisted a little indignantly.

"You'd better make it five o'clock to meet me," Cissie advised. "Then you won't be worrying if you keep me waiting."

Once more she whispered something to Odette.

"Parole d'honneur! Je ne suis pas rosse."

The little Englishwoman, so like an anxious nursery governess, was reassured. Odette would keep her promise. She would not take a sou from Johnnie.

The weather was clear and quiet and warm again when at two o'clock Odette and John left the café to walk slowly along the silent streets to the house where she was living.

"Bras dessus bras dessous," she whispered.

And when he took her left arm she pulled his hand higher until it was pressed against her breast.

"J'ai des beaux nichons, oui?" she asked.

He stopped to answer her with a kiss. A decrecent moon lately risen was hanging over the chimney-tops. A dim human shape withdrew into the shadow of an alley just ahead. Her tongue swift as a honey-seeking moth pierced his lips for an instant. John shivered. When they drew apart the moon seemed to be falling down on them, and his hand clutched at hers to steady himself against the fancy that he was reeling too. A little laugh of contentment trilled in her lovely throat. She triumphed like a

naiad who has lured a mortal youth to the deeps of her own blue world.

"Vache!"

It was Odette's contemptuously dismissed lover who spat out the savage monosyllable. He had stepped forward into the moonlight before them.

"Ta gueule, sale maquereau!" she spat back.

The despised one raised an arm to strike her. John, thinking in the very moment of flinging himself forward to tackle his rival how extraordinary a thing it was that a few weeks ago he should still have been at school, brought the despised one down with an exhilarating crash to hit his head against the kerbstone and lie motionless in the gutter.

"Ai-je le tué, I mean l'ai-je tué, I mean est-ce que je l'ai tué?" John enquired, his anxiety about the correctness of his French mitigating his anxiety about the fate of Odette's former lover.

"Tant mieux s'il est crevé, le roule-en-cul!"

She knelt down to examine the damage, and John bending over beside her was sharply aware of the lemon-scented brilliantine on the hair of the unconscious man mingled with the faded perfume of chypre and perspiration from Odette's dress.

"Il n'y a pas même du sang," she announced scornfully. "Allons-y, ma poupée."

"Mais nous devons trouver de l'eau," John urged. "Il a besoin d'un peu d'eau, je crois."

"Vraiment? Alors fais ton besoin. Comme ça il en aura assez. Mais non, sans boniments, filons. Je ne veux pas qu'un tel salaud gâte notre belle nuit d'amour."

John was satisfied that the despised one was not more

than temporarily knocked out. There was no mark of a blow. If one of the police should find him like this he would be supposed to have fallen of his own accord.

The house in which Odette lived stood in a narrow street hard by one of the riverside quays, and her room was at the very top of it, an attic in the roof. Half-way up the narrow stairs John had been seized with a panic that, when he found himself in the intimacy of Odette's room, by the gaucherie of his amorous behaviour he would give away so clumsily the fact of its being the first time he had ever been to bed with a woman that in disgust at such a booby she would bid him clear off. When he saw the bed it seemed as empty and vast and awesome as the football-field on which he was to play his first match for the Classical Fifteen against the Moderns at St James's School.

Odette had flung off her cloak and was holding him close in another wild embrace.

"Comme elle me plait, ta bouche! On dirait un bouton de rose. Je deviens tout à fait jeune fille quand tu me tiens dans tes bras. Raconte-moi ton premier petit roman. Était-elle blonde ou brune? Grande? Petite? Dis-moi, dis, mon ange. Je ne serai pas méchante. Pourtant j'aurais voulu bien te donner le premier leçon d'amour."

"Je n'ai jamais . . ." how on earth did one say . . . "je n'ai jamais couché. . . ." John stumbled on, blushing hotly for his ignorance even of the very speech of love in French. He could have expressed himself more fluently in Latin.

"Pas vrai!" Odette exclaimed joyfully. "Pas vrai que tu n'as jamais couché avec une femme?"

"Oui, c'est vrai. Je vous assure . . . I mean . . . je t'assure."

"Comme je suis veinarde, moi!" Odette cried in ecstasy. "C'est assommant, tu sais; moi, j'ai fait l'amour tant de fois depuis que j'ai eu treize ans, mais jamais, jamais je n'ai fait l'amour avec quelqu'un comme toi. Oh, comme je suis contente, comme je suis heureuse. Je te jure que tu te souviendras de tes premières noces pendant la reste de ta vie. Alors, je suis ta gouvernante cette nuit, je suis ta miss?"

John thought that Odette looked very much more like a goddess than a governess, like Juno indeed in Tintoretto's Origin of the Milky Way. He wondered if it would be good manners to turn down the lamp which was on his side. Ovid's four books of the *Ars Amatoria* provided no answer to this problem. Odette divined his perplexity, and shook her head so that her fair tresses flowed down over her snowy shoulders to hide her snowy breasts.

"Je ne veux pas perdre tes beaux yeux bleus. Mais prenez-vous garde aux yeux bleus," she added on a lilt from one of her songs.

Then she turned and caught him to her.

Odette fell asleep before John did. He lay for a long while watching the circle of lamplight on the ceiling. It was like a new planet sailing into his ken, an influential planet too. To this white form sleeping so quietly beside him he had been an agreeable but utterly casual incident. To him that white form was in the significance of the revelation it had accorded to him not less important than the dazzling nakedness of Aphrodite herself. He sat up to contemplate womanhood. She was sleeping with her right cheek pillowed upon her right hand, on the palm of which rested the fingers of the other hand reversed like a dancer making the conventional gesture of slumber. The

curve from shoulder to hip, graceful even beneath the huddle of bedclothes, tempted him to fling them back and expose all that beauty, not for sensuous delight but in that spirit of worship which perceived the dryad within the tree, the oread behind the wreath of upland mist. What a comparison he could have made for old Askew between the treatment of love by the modern poets and the old Romans if he had had this experience of Odette before he wrote his essay! Epithets he had translated into dusty dictionary English when construing in class now flowed freely and untranslatable. Who was it that had called one of his loves 'fulgida'? That was Odette. She was 'fulgida'. And when John had put out the lamp the word blazed through the darkness.

He woke with the rising of the sun. Odette was still asleep, her attitude unchanged. He lay, watching the blind of the dormer window belly and flap in the summer breeze and listening to the isolated sounds of morning in the street below.

"I ought to be feeling frightfully tired," he reflected. "Two nights in the open and only three hours' sleep last night. Yet I feel perfectly fresh."

He turned round to look at Odette. She opened her eyes. They were bright hazel by this light, with more green in them than brown. He had supposed them blue last night. What an odd lack of observation!

"Dodo, dodo, ma poupée," she murmured drowsily. "Je suis fatiguée? Quelle heure est-il?"

"Sept heures."

"Ah, par exemple," she protested, and snuggled deeper into the bedclothes to escape from such a cruel hour.

John lay awake for a long time, meditating on the

pattern of his life during these last four months which had been so much more eventful than all the years before them: but when he tried to carry that pattern forward into the future he became confused by the intricacy it began to assume, and in confusion he fell asleep again.

It was noon when he woke for the second time. Odette was sitting up, stretching herself like an overgrown school-girl and shouting to somebody outside the door for coffee. John felt embarrassed at the prospect of a third person's entering the room. He managed to lodge an objection in halting French; but the only effect of it was that when the serving-girl did arrive with the coffee she was informed of his embarrassment as a good joke.

After coffee Odette bade John leave her. He was hurt by her readiness to be rid of him. The classic attitude he had discerned in himself last night had already been ousted by the sentiment of to-day. He tried to win from her an expression of regret, an admission of emotion. Was she not in the least sorry to part with him?

Yes, she was sorry, but of what use was it to be sorry? He was in no position to keep her as a mistress. Therefore it was more sage to part now than later. He had pleased her greatly. It had been a delicious experience. She should not forget her *petit anglais* at once.

Ah, she would remember him?

Of course she would.

For how long?

Odette shrugged her shoulders. That depended.

On other people?

She shrugged her shoulders again, a little impatiently this time.

John dressed in silence, and when he was ready to go

stood puzzled. He was sure that he ought to make her a present; but how much ought that present to be? Certainly he could leave her without making a present and send her something by Cissie after consultation with her. But what if Odette should suppose that he was trying to avoid his obligations?

"Viens ici," Odette called to him from where she was lying on her back in bed, and regarding him with those prominent bright big hazel eyes, brighter for the tarnished gold of her prodigal hair. "Écoute, mon petit," she said solemnly, "tu penses à ce que tu dois me régaler pour nôtre belle nuit d'amour, n'est-ce pas? Non, non," she interrupted when he would have explained his problem. "J'ai bien compris. Or, je ne veux pas absolument que tu me donnes de l'argent. Embrasse-moi. Ne fais pas des moues comme un petit enfant. Embrasse-moi."

Her hazel eyes began to twinkle, and in her husky voice, huskier still in the morning air, she sang softly:

"Puisqu' entre nous tout est fini,
Disons adieu, mon gros bébé.

Pourtant depuis que tu as couché avec Odette tu n'es plus bébé."

She gathered him to her and held him close in a long kiss. 'Elle est fraîche, fraîche,' she murmured to herself.

"Quoi?"

"Ta bouche, ma poupée d'amour. Ah, oui, il est frais, ton beau bec. Mais j'en ai eu assez. Adieu, adieu! Je dormirai encore. Laissez-moi," and with that abrupt plural of the second person she dissolved their brief intimacy.

When John entered his hotel, he had an impression that the head-porter had shrunk since yesterday.

"If a Miss Oliver enquires for me," he said coldly, "I am in."

"Sairtainly, sair."

His acknowledgment was obsequious.

"And I am leaving to-night for Paris," John added, with a haughtiness that still further abased the porter.

"For Paris?" John asked himself as he stepped into the lift.

The notion of visiting the Exhibition had occurred to him when he was playing with the fancy of getting back his losses and more beside at *petits chevaux*; but he was not aware of having definitely made up his mind to visit the Exhibition until he had informed the porter of his destination. Up in the bedroom, he counted over his money. It would certainly be cutting things fine, but if necessary he could telegraph again to his father from Paris. John was filled by a rich confidence in his own ability to confront any situation. The last twenty-four hours had been twenty-four months! He now descended to the dining-saloon and, although it was sometime past two o'clock, demanded *déjeuner*. He discovered as he had expected that the head-waiter had shrunk like the porter.

John had already found out about his train and finished his packing at five o'clock when Cissie Oliver called at the hotel.

"You *are* back then, you bad boy."

She was still wearing the dark-blue coat and skirt piped and braided with scarlet, and the English spinsters in the lounge eyed her with suspicion across their cups of deplorable continental tea.

"As a matter of fact, I got back before two."

"Fancy, what an early bird! Well, and now I suppose you'll be wanting to pack me off so as to get back to Odette before she goes down to the Café?"

The little woman spoke lightly, but John detected an anxious note underneath.

"No, I'm going to Paris to-night. Then I'll spend to-morrow looking at the Exhibition and cross by Havre to-morrow night."

"Oh, Johnnie, I am glad," she exclaimed impulsively, putting out a shabbily gloved hand to touch his forearm. He felt strangely moved by the sight of that frayed glove of grey suède. The whole of Cissie's struggle with life was expressed by it.

"Come and sit over there in the corner, and we'll have tea."

They withdrew from the propinquity of the English spinsters to a couple of wicker chairs set beneath a dusty palm.

"So you didn't fall so madly in love with Odette?"

"She was awfully decent."

"Well, she's a good sort. If I hadn't known that, I'd have had something more to say before you went back with her last night. The only thing which really worried me was that boy of hers coming back like that. I was afraid there'd be a proper row."

"There nearly was; but I knocked him out, luckily."

"You didn't have a fight? Oh, Johnnie, aren't you the limit?"

John related the brief details of the despised one's attempt to interrupt the night's idyll.

"Well, all I can say is you *were* lucky. He might have

knifed you. He's nothing better than a proper Apache. I hope he won't try any of his dirty tricks on Odette to-night."

"Do you think . . ."

"Oh, what's the good of you staying on the off-chance of a row?" Cissie interrupted quickly. "Besides, her other boy will probably be back to-night."

"Oh, then she has another boy?"

"Another boy? She's got dozens. Well, I mean to say, she's a very attractive girl. But you took her eye properly, and no mistake. I've never seen her so mashed on anyone all of a sudden like that. I really felt quite awkward. Still, live and learn, they say. And if you wanted a night out I knew Odette could be trusted."

"She wouldn't accept a present."

"Well, of course not. She wouldn't want to be paid for what she was doing for love."

"I'd hardly have called it love," said John, who was still feeling that Odette might have encouraged his sentimental mood of this morning.

"Well, it was what they call a *béguin*. I tell you I never saw her hook anybody up the way she hooked you."

"She sent me off pretty coolly."

"Did she? I expect she was afraid of making a fool of herself. She couldn't afford to get soppy. She's different to what I am, Odette is. Of course, I've travelled with one or two as far as the bus goes. I'm not a virgin martyr. But I see pretty straight, even if I don't always walk straight. And men don't want from me what they want from Odette. If I started in being off-handed with men like what she is I'd miss the bus altogether. Nothing surer. I've had one or two good friends, because I've been

a good pal to them. And to tell the truth, most of my friends have been fellows who didn't get off too easily with more flash girls than what I am."

"You were a jolly good friend to me, Cissie."

"That's all right. You needn't start making excuses because you didn't ask me to take you home. I didn't expect you to. And that's the flat truth. Not for a moment, I didn't. For one thing, laugh if you like, but I wouldn't have thought it right."

"Were you shocked at my going home with Odette?"

"Of course I wasn't. That's another thing altogether. You didn't meet her in a church, and she's younger than me. Much younger. And she's pretty. Still, I'm glad you're going away from here. Once is all right, but you don't want to go falling madly in love with a girl like Odette at your age. You couldn't be more than a toy for her."

John flushed.

"Well, you couldn't, Johnnie. You couldn't really. Look at you now, colouring up like a girl yourself. In another ten years you may be able to do what you like with a girl like Odette, but by that time you'll be looking beyond Odettes. At least if you're not you won't be much credit to yourself. You'll be twenty-nine then."

Since she was so contemptuous of his rawness at the nineteen she supposed him John decided to tell her his actual age.

"Seventeen!" she gasped. "Oh, well, aren't you the limit? Seventeen! And gambling away all his money and sleeping with a café concert girl and off on his own now to Paris. No wonder your Pa was a bit annoyed. I won't half call Odette a baby-snatcher when I see her to-night."

Youth's vanity was gratified. John faced with equanimity the sahara of that nonage which still remained to him. By the time he was twenty-five he might hope to be mistaken for thirty-five.

On the way up through France, notwithstanding the fullness and food-scented airlessness of the second-class compartment, John slept. Cavernous stations echoing to the rattle of luggage-trucks impinged upon his consciousness at intervals during the night. At such moments he could see by the light of the veiled lamp in the roof his five fellow-passengers bloated by sleep in a huddle on the opposite seat, like packed-away puppets. Round about six he woke up completely. Fontainebleau's green forest rolled along the skyline glowing in the air of the morning beneath a watchet sky. The mouths of the sleeping travellers worked like a *solfatara*. An exhalation of stale breath filled the compartment. John let down the windows. The sleepers woke in horror at the fresh air. A fat man in a grey alpaca jacket opposite John pulled up the window, with that in his manner which suggested he had saved by his prompt action a ship's crew from drowning. It was a relief to see the first advertisement hoardings that marked the nearness of Paris. John put his luggage in the *consigne* at the Gare de Lyon, ate his breakfast in that restaurant which suggests that one is eating in the organ-loft of some cathedral, and rattled away in a fiacre to the nearest entrance of the Exhibition Universelle.

Here, after a period of aimless wandering round several of the pavilions of the various nations taking part, he discovered the moving platforms which at varying rates of speed continuously encircled the whole Exhibition. The behaviour of people on this novel form of entertain-

ment was much more entertaining than any display of the national resources of the exhibiting nations. It was of greater interest to observe the despairing antics of an elderly lady being left behind by her family because she had stepped back in affright on the fixed platform or to listen to the yells of a child being carried away from its nurse because the nurse had not summoned up the courage to step from the fixed platform to the moving one. It was pleasant to walk at four miles an hour in the same direction as the fastest platform was moving and thus seem to be flying round the Exhibition past the coloured tiles of the pavilions, past the tree-tops, past the people swarming below, and it was amusing to run in the opposite direction so that with all one's effort one remained stationary.

John had been enjoying himself like this for a couple of hours when he suddenly caught sight of Emil Stern sitting on a seat at one of the 'stations' and jumping across the platforms was presently beside him.

"Emil, what a rag finding you here!"

It appeared that the Sterns had come over to France as soon as school had broken up for Julius to see a Parisian doctor, and they were now going to spend the summer holidays at Fontainebleau so that Julius could see him every week. There was a chance after all that the edict of previous doctors would be revoked and that he would be able to play in public again next year. At this moment Emil's mother and brother were at the doctor's, and they were to meet him in about half an hour at the Dutch Pavilion just below the moving platform station where he had been sitting.

"And you'll be able to come back with us to Fontainebleau," Emil added.

John gave a brief account of his adventures. He did not feel sure that his father would agree to such a visit.

"Oh, but mother can write to your father and make it clear that you've not fallen into the hands of thieves or whores. As a matter of fact we were wishing we knew what your plans were, on the chance of your being able to join us. You never wrote."

"Well, you didn't want a picture postcard and I had no energy to write a long letter. But I've got just enough oof to get home with and . . ."

"We can lend you all the money you want," Emil interrupted. "But if your father is going to get married and set out on a wedding-tour I should think he'd be glad to have you off his hands."

"I don't know if his proposed wife will be well enough."

"What's it matter anyway? You must be *somewhere* in August."

"We'll see what your mater says."

"She'll say what I say. She often talks about you."

John was pleased to hear this; but in spite of his rapid advance toward a perfect maturity during the last month, he was still youthful enough to feel a fear of making an ass of himself by a too evident display of gratification, and he quickly asked Emil how he had done in the Exams.

"I was top both in Latin and Greek, and I won the Rouse Prize for Latin Verse and the Carrington Prize for Greek Iambics."

"You beat Combermere? Good lord, I should think that's the first time a fellow in the Lower Sixth had beaten the Captain of the School. You're a bloody little marvel, aren't you?" John added affectionately.

Mrs Stern left John in no doubt of her delight at that

chance meeting. She was convinced that a tactful telegram to his father followed by equally tactful letters from John and herself would secure the necessary permission for him to spend the next six weeks at Fontainebleau.

"Six weeks, Mrs Stern!" John expostulated. "Why, you'll be sick to death of me ages before that."

"No, dear John, we shan't be."

"I want to learn about butterflies," Julius announced abruptly.

John looked round startled. For a moment he supposed that the prodigy meant human butterflies, and to study himself as a representative of their habits.

"Julius heard you talking about butterflies once, John, and your knowledge made a profound impression on him," Mrs Stern explained.

"We ought to get some good fritillaries in Fontainebleau, and even purple-emperors, I should think. I saw an Apollo at Grindelwald. I was frightfully excited. It was the first time I had ever seen one on the wing."

"What's an Apollo like?" Julius asked. "Shall we see one at Fontainebleau?"

"No, it's an Alpine butterfly. It's white, with almost transparent wings spotted with bright red and bright blue."

John wished it were as easy for Julius to communicate to him his knowledge of music as for him to communicate to Julius his knowledge of butterflies.

"I don't like killing things," Emil put in. "I think collecting is the worst of human vanities."

"Oh well, I don't suppose I shall go on collecting butterflies," said John. "But I can tell Julius about them without collecting them."

"I shouldn't mind killing a lot of Frenchmen after the Dreyfus case," Julius observed.

"Julius, dear, let me implore you to be careful how you talk like that in public. And why have you suddenly taken up this bloodthirsty attitude?"

"I don't know. I think I'm beginning to feel well," the musical prodigy replied.

It was already dusk when they reached the crooked little white house in the forest which Mrs Stern had taken for the holidays. In the warmth and stillness of high summer it glimmered like a house in a fairy-tale. Leaning out of his bedroom window that night and drinking in the scent of the bracken, that scent at once so heady and so languorous, John composed in his head the tactful letter to his father which was to follow up the telegram already sent off.

Three days later Alexander Ogilvie alighted from a hansom at the door of the nursing-home where Elise Hunter was making a rapid recovery from her operation. It was a hot still afternoon, sabbath seeming in that quiet of the August holidays which was so much more evident in the London of a generation ago. The planes in the Marylebone square were fresh enough as yet, but the foliage of the lime-trees had already assumed that mat monotonous green which precedes a drab decline and fall. A passing whiff from a barrow of plums which a costermonger was wheeling alongside the pavement reminded the barrister that it was stale and dusty in London and that he and Elise should have been in the Dolomites by now.

The nurse, who had the look nurses sometimes have of being undressable like certain dolls, took the bunch of

picotees Alexander Ogilvie had brought with him to put them into a vase, and led the way to his fiancée's room where Lady Hunter, a majestic woman, who like the nurse looked permanently dressed, was sitting with her daughter.

"She is so much better to-day, Alec," Lady Hunter's contralto proclaimed, "that I think we shall get her down into the country within a very few days, and I was just saying that you should come down to Worcestershire with us and have a quiet marriage at the end of the month. Talk it over with Elise. I must go now. I told Baxter to come for me at half-past."

Her future son-in-law looked out of the window.

"The carriage is there now."

It would have amused John to observe the deference with which his father escorted Lady Hunter to her victoria.

Back in Elise's room Alexander Ogilvie showed her the two letters he had received by this morning's post from Fontainebleau:

Dear Father,

I expect you have been wondering what had happened to me. By mistake you sent the money to a different hotel. So I waited about ten days in Geneva before I got it. Thanks very much for sending it. I arrived in Paris yesterday as I thought you would think it a good idea if I had a squint look at the Paris Exhibition which as a matter of fact was rather boring. I intended to come back via Havre which is cheaper, but I met a school friend at the Exhibition and his mother has asked me to stay with them at Fontainebleau till the middle of September. Of course I do not know your plans, but if

this fits in with them I think it would be rather a good opportunity for me to work at French. I hope Elise is a jolly sight better by now. Please tell her how sorry I was about her illness and say how much I am looking forward to meeting her.

*Your affectionate son,
John*

P.S. I had to spend a certain amount at the Exhibition getting a wedding-present for you and Elise. I would have bought you something in Geneva, but I thought you would be bored by a cuckoo-clock. So I got you six liqueur glasses at the Venetian glass place. The glass is called aventurine. If you could manage to send me some money, supposing you think it would be a good idea for me to stay on at Fontainebleau, I'd be awfully grateful.

"You'll let him stay, Alec?" Elise urged.

"I suppose in one way it does solve a problem. I had been wondering if my brother Duncan would have him until this tutor I've found for him is ready. But this woman—a Jewess I take it—ought to be able to keep him out of further mischief."

Alexander Ogilvie handed Elise the letter from Miriam Stern:

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

We are near neighbours in Hampstead, but I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, and so I must ask your pardon for writing to you like this. Your boy has been extremely kind to my boy at St James's School, and he has always been a welcome visitor at my house. Yesterday to our great pleasure we met him by chance at

The Four Winds of Love

the Exhibition and I persuaded him to come back with us to a little house I have taken in the forest here for the rest of the summer, my younger boy Julius being under treatment by Dr Belot, the Paris specialist, and so having to visit him every week. Now I am writing to ask you to allow John to remain with us for the rest of the summer. I hear from John that you have recently gone through a most anxious time, and I hope I may be allowed to express my deep sympathy. Naturally my request must depend on any plans you have already made for John; but we should all be grievously disappointed if his visit to us has to be cut short. I am arranging that both my boys shall do a certain amount of serious study of French, and if you think this would be advantageous for John I will see that he works with equal seriousness.

~Forgive me if I intrude unjustifiably, but it has occurred to me that you might care to be reassured about John's rather foolish adventure in Geneva. Nothing could have been more stupid than gambling away his money like that, so stupid that it was not surprising you should have wondered if that was the whole explanation. You may feel perfectly at ease. I am satisfied that everything happened exactly as John told you. He has certainly had a lesson, and perhaps you will think as I do that a sharp lesson of such a kind at an impressionable age will be good for him. I fancy he is unlikely to gamble again for some time. He has not told you, I understand, that when the 'relief' money did not arrive after a miserable week of waiting without a centime he finally spent two nights in the open and had no food for thirty-six hours. This needn't have happened, but John with the self-consciousness of seventeen years old got into

his head that the management of his hotel were regarding him with suspicion as an impostor!

I need not waste any more of your time with my screech; but I cannot close without trying to let you know with what affection we regard John. I had intended to comment on the joy of finding a boy of his age and gifts so devoid of egoism, so immediately susceptible to the point of view of other people, and so unfailingly considerate.

We all hope so very much that you will let John stay on with us.

Yours sincerely,

Miriam Stern

"What an encouraging letter, Alec!" Elise exclaimed. "I'm beginning to feel a little injured over having been denied anything more than a distant glimpse of him from the stalls at Covent Garden. He's evidently a charmer. Of course you'll let him stay with this Mrs Stern. You think she's a Jewess?"

"I should imagine so by the names. Well, well, I suppose it's always the same story between father and son, and I may be partly to blame."

"Dear Alec, if you could be to John as you are to me, and if he could be to you as he evidently is to Mrs Stern, the rest of the world wouldn't have a look in. How sweet it was of him to buy that present for us, and how tactful to resist giving us a cuckoo-clock. You'll write to Mrs Stern, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, certainly I shall. As I said, this is a solution of a mild problem."

In years to come Miriam Stern was to look back to this summer of 1900 through clouds of butterflies. The coincidence of Julius's new health with the passion—for nothing milder than passion it was—fired in him by a chance spark but fanned by John's enthusiasm gave those butterflies a quasi-angelic significance. Emil's protest against the destruction of life was not regarded, and indeed he himself regarded it no longer, for although he would not collect on his own account, he was willing to join in the chase on behalf of his brother. Julius became an unqualified bug-hunter with net, poison-bottle, pins, cork-lined specimen-boxes, and all the rest of the paraphernalia. Those violinist's fingers set swallow-tail or hair-streak with equal delicacy, and it was a joy to watch him when he was not actually playing music concentrated at last on something instead of sitting moodily in corners; but what pleased his mother most was to see him racing down a rough slope in a reckless diagonal in pursuit of some swift flyer like an oak-eggar or standing in a woodland ride to observe the silver-washed fritillaries drop like autumn leaves from the shade of the trees to a sunlit patch of green below. Miriam Stern had enough music in herself not to feel cut off completely from her younger son; but she recognized that tendency, which insufficiently examined though it might have been could be called at least provisionally a biological law, to make music in its profounder implications an exclusively masculine art. During this banishment of Julius from the concert-platform she had been continuously aware of his persistent withdrawal into that moon-cold world of abstract music from which she was as inexorably excluded as from the higher mathematics. An indifference to external ugliness

ness, in fact a distinct encouragement of external ugliness, was a characteristic of the higher musical mind. The inward ear seemed to delight in humiliating the outward eye. Scarcely an instrument possessed even as much pictorial beauty as was usually conferred on any object which perfectly fulfilled its functional purpose. Moreover, the development of an instrument's utility had always increased the ugliness of its form. A chest of viols in the seventeenth century presented a more seemly appearance than a modern string quartet. Inside and out the pianoforte was unsightly. What was more awkward than a bassoon unless it were a trombone? The very playing of most instruments distorted the human countenance. And the concert hall or saloon! The amount of meaningless turnery in the decoration, the gilt and the gaudiness, the gimcrack music-stands. The ugliness could not be explained by the domination of Germanic taste in the world of music. It was more probable that German taste was so bad just because the Teutonic mind had produced the largest proportion of great music. It was not without significance that the German nation was myopic. Julius from earliest childhood had been blind to external beauty. Twice only had his mother seen him excited by the visible object, once when he had examined snow-crystals with a powerful magnifying-glass and a second time when he had looked at diatoms through a microscope. Indeed, when he had first displayed this sudden interest in butterflies his mother had supposed it was as objects for the microscope that they interested him. He was indeed fascinated by the shapes and colours of the eggs, those minute spheres and pears and oblongs of delicate green or apricot or ivory; but that enjoyment was completely

subordinate to the pleasure of the chase. When Miriam watched the boys, it seemed to her that in capturing butterflies that summer in Fontainebleau they caught the fleeting moment itself. There was one day in particular when on the outskirts of the forest, beholding hundreds of clouded-yellows in a great field of clover, she could not keep from crying out:

"Oh, my dears, my dears, the golden minutes of this golden summer are staying with us."

John thought it would be jolly to put three clouded-yellows in a box and present them to Mrs Stern, a minute from each of the three who owed to her their gold. He had ambitions to buy a golden box for this commemoration, but they were discouraged by Emil who thought sandalwood was just as suitable and a great deal cheaper. The next time Julius went in to Paris with his mother to see the doctor, John and Emil roamed off to look for a suitable box, and by good fortune found one of gilded filigree in the shape of a small basket. John whose mind was still on pure gold insisted that a small plate was to be affixed on which was to be engraved:

THE SUMMER OF 1900

"It's a waste of money," Emil declared.

"I'm paying for the plate myself," John replied. "We can go shares over the box."

Emil fought back the impulse to agree to this as an unquestionable bargain and hoped when he insisted on going shares with John in the golden inscription that his temptation had not been noticed. After buying the box they went to a Duval restaurant for lunch, when John demanded frogs for himself.

"Frogs?" Emil repeated. "Did you say frogs?"

"Yes, I said frogs. Have you any objection to watching me eat frogs?"

"I was only rather surprised by your courage."

"Look here, Emil, I wish you'd give up treating me as if I were an English tripper," John protested indignantly.

"I do not pretend to your cosmopolitan omniscience, but at least I can hope to acquire some of it with practice."

When John tasted his first frog he shuddered. His previous experience of the French mind had not led him to suppose that it could tolerate and even extol anything so repulsive.

"You don't seem to like your frogs," Emil jeered.

"Oh yes, I do," John contradicted loftily. However profound his disgust he was determined not to give Emil a chance to jeer at his insularity of taste.

"You don't give that impression. They're very like chicken, after all. Think of them as birds, if the thought of eating a frog upsets you."

"Don't be so damned condescending. Do you think I'm still in the nursery and can't eat my food without having to make a game of it?"

John took another mouthful; but try as he might he could not conceal his disgust. They might look like birds' legs: they tasted like the legs of decayed crabs.

"There's a very queer smell in this restaurant," Emil observed.

"Is there? I suppose it's the mixture of food," said John.

Emil leant over the table.

"My god!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"The frogs! They're bad!"

The waitress agreed with Emil. The dish was removed. By the expression on her face it looked as if the cook was in for a rough few minutes.

"I'm glad frogs don't taste like that when they're fresh," said John pensively. "It was beginning to shake my confidence in the French nation. Still, I think I'll wait a bit before I try them again."

"I wonder why you have this passion for the French?" Emil asked. Then lowering his voice, he went on, "I should have thought the Dreyfus case would have sickened anybody of the French. That business stank and tasted worse than bad frogs."

"Well, we can't argue about that in a restaurant, though I think there's a great deal to be said for the anti-Dreyfusard position. Anyway, the revolting self-righteousness of the English Press was enough to make one think so."

"If you think like that I wonder you can bear the company of Jews so bravely as you do. Or do you accept them in the same spirit as you tried to eat those frogs—an unpleasant experience which must be endured for the sake of your worldly education?"

"Now, look here, Emil, you're not going to make me angry. You know you're talking rot. If the whole of the anti-Dreyfusard spirit were merely an unreasonable anti-Semitic outburst I wouldn't bother to consider it, and you know that. But, as I see them, the anti-Dreyfusards are trying to re-establish aristocracy in France, and from that point of view there is something to be said for them. It's unfortunate they should have made a Jew the victim, because that obscured the whole issue. . . ."

"You imagine I am Dreyfusard because I'm a Jew," Emil interrupted. "Not at all. It's just because these shoddy French militarists dreaming of revenge for the humiliation of the war against Prussia are trying to build up a mock aristocracy in a country whose chief contribution to civilization is that it recognized just over a century ago the rottenness of its existing aristocracy, that I hate French militarism."

"Well, look here, we really can't argue this out in a restaurant," John objected. "Besides, you and I will never be on the same political side. I don't see why that's necessary. It doesn't make me less fond of you personally."

"But it ought to," Emil declared. "And it will ultimately. A friendship cannot endure without agreement on the general principles of human conduct."

"Then why not make the most of it now?" said John. "I don't yet feel strongly enough about any question not to see the other side."

"Feel!" Emil scoffed. "The sooner you give up feeling about things and start thinking about them the better."

"That's a distinction without a difference in the present argument. I've got to be in the wrong to-day for some reason, even if it's only verbally. But to return to what I was saying. I enjoy your ability to think, if you insist on calling it that, so strongly. I envy Fitzgerald his political passion. I see that you and he simply could not be friends, now or ever. But I am still able to be friends with both of you."

"I believe the chief reason I've been enjoying this butterfly-chasing," said Emil gloomily, "is that you're so like a butterfly yourself."

That night, after one of those delicious suppers of skimmed-milk cheese and lettuce and fruit to which John would always look back as another expression of this airy summer, Emil sat with his mother in the patch of garden won from the majestic woodland around. Julius and John had gone off to sugar the tree-trunks for moths. The night was warm. The smell of lush bracken bore down upon the spicy garden scents. On the dark body of the sky the stars seemed to lie like heavy gems cut in the olden style with large facets.

"I'm afraid, you know," he told her, "that John will never do anything really worth while. What do you think, *ma mère*?"

"I think it's much too early to give any opinion on that point," Miriam Stern replied.

"Yes, but for instance this notion of his that he is going to write. What's he going to write about?"

"Won't that be a problem John will be called upon to decide for himself?"

"Yes, yes," Emil assented impatiently, "that goes without saying. The point I'm making is that there are no signs at present of his being justified in supposing that he will be able to write. It doesn't seem to me reasonable at this stage in the development of humanity to write unless one is convinced one has something to say which has not been said before."

"So you're going to limit writing to original poets and major prophets? What about entertainment?"

"Oh well, I suppose that will go on. But what an existence! To live by one's ability to amuse!"

"Shakespeare managed to do it."

"I doubt if his inspiration was a desire to amuse. He

merely took advantage of his ability to amuse in order to express himself."

"I wonder. I fancy he would have claimed that his primary business was entertainment. It seems to me that this conception of an artist's dignity is a modern conception taking its origin in a growing belief that humanity has put aside childish things. Every year from now on we shall feel more and more acutely the effects of popular education, which can only mean for at least a century and probably for much longer a steady debasement of taste and an ever-increasing scepticism founded upon cheapened knowledge. That will drive people like you, Emil, into a deliberately exclusive and very small intellectual and artistic minority, from the cloistral calm of which you will dream and scheme the improvement of the immense majority. You are anxious that John shall follow you. But I don't think John ever will."

"No, he's the perfect butterfly."

"He may be. But even butterflies have their uses. They fertilize many flowers during their beautiful existence. However, I think John's butterfly condition may be merely the expression of a more romantic youthful attitude than your own, Emil. And is not the fact that you love him so much a tribute to his butterfly condition? What are you in love with except with his quick ways and vivid colour? What exasperates you except your inability to catch him in your own net?"

Miriam Stern was tempted to tell her sixteen-year-old son that she herself could surrender to a love for John Ogilvie which would be considered by most people as infelicitous as his own; but although her intimacy with her sons was so much profounder than the usual maternal

relationship in adolescence and without a trace of that hostility which in masculine nations like the English and the German so often marks the relation between mother and son at the onset of manhood, she could not bring herself to the pitch of such frankness. Emil in turn was thrown back into his secret self by his mother's last question, which to be answered truthfully would have demanded a revelation he was not prepared to grant anybody in cold blood.

"I shall go in and do some work," he announced.

His mother stayed in the garden, leaning back in the wicker chair and gazing upon the candent heavy stars of the August night. What actually was it that forbade her to bind John Ogilvie with the silken threads of passion? Was it the dread of seeing him chilled by the warmth in herself? And if so was it regard for her own pride or his which prompted such a dread? Was it a perception of ugliness in the physical union of a youth of seventeen with a woman twenty years older than himself? There should be no ugliness in that if she were able to rouse desire, no ugliness if she were strong enough to release him at the moment of recognizing that he was near to passing from her. Was she not entitled to claim that in giving herself to this boy she was giving him wisdom without the bitterness of experience?

Miriam for a while deliberately allowed the sensuous languor of the night to obsess her fancy. She moved restlessly in the chair as if her body sought his body. Her lips were slightly parted as if the warm air of this star-laden night were the breath of his kiss. She thrust her hand down to her left breast, calling it in fancy his hand and trying to imagine whether he would shrink from the

softness of a breast that had sacrificed contour and resilience to maternity. But if she surrendered to desire could she face the eyes of Emil and the eyes of Julius? By bringing into the world two prodigies was she not thereby denied for ever the gratification of *la femme moyenne sensuelle*? Fulfilment had been hers already; what remained was mere gratification. An ugly word. And if the word was ugly, was not the action ugly? Yet might she not by summoning the courage to face that word and admitting that the impulse was in her own case gratification, give to him something far beyond the gratification of immature desire? Might not Emil have been right in attributing to John a dissipation of energy and emotion and thought that might become an incurable habit? Could she not with the power which physical intimacy would bestow upon her concentrate in a deep pool the shallow rills? Let her accept the brutal fact that he was to give her that perfection of bodily passion which she had never known and which unless she found it in his youth it was too late for her to know now. Let her recognize how madly she craved that red bow of a mouth, how sharply her breasts ached for those long brown fingers, how much she yearned to behold those deep blue eyes as flickering points of sexual energy, how easily in the sweet shamelessness of passion she could afford to mock at the ivory profile of the young matron moving sedately toward middle-age. So be it. But in return? Already he was under the sway of her taste, willing to accord an authority to her he had granted to none. What an influence might be hers if she could make him even for a year depend on her body to reach her mind! But suppose that the racial distance between them should suddenly be stressed by her own

fault? Suppose that her physical domination had been shattered before it ever attempted to assert itself? If he should draw back like a young Joseph, she would never know if it were her age or her race which had repelled him.

Miriam jumped up from her chair, and walked past a bed of white petunias towards the forest. The spicy garden scents were drowned in the pervading smell of the lush bracken. She felt as if she had left behind in that chair a foolish woman whose company had become intolerable. Presently lanterns came winking through the trees. It was the return of the moth-hunters.

"We struck a hatch of crimson-underwings," Julius announced solemnly. "I'm going in to set them right away."

"Walk with me for a while among the trees, John," said Miriam. "I've been sitting still too long in the garden and found it a little damp."

She put an arm in his as a challenge to herself. It was as if she demanded a proof of equanimity.

"I say, aren't you getting rather sick of having me here?" John asked.

"Not in the least, as none should know better than you, dear John."

"My father will be getting married to-morrow. Odd isn't it, to think of a man of his age falling in love, and even more odd to think of a young woman falling in love with him?"

"You think it's odd, do you?"

"Well, I don't believe I should like to fall in love when I'm forty-seven. I should think it a little undignified. Even if I were sure the young woman was in love with me I should feel that other people thought it ridiculous."

"Do you think that other people count for much in a matter like that?" Miriam asked. They had reached a messy ride between overarching trees which hid the stars. In such a verdurous solitude common opinion sounded a little shrill.

"Not really of course," John agreed. "But if one happened to hear what they thought it would be humiliating."

"I think, and I say this with every apology in advance, that you are still under the influence of school life which so far as I can make out is ruled entirely by what other people think and say. Look back at your schoolfellows now, John. Do they mean anything to you?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then won't you treat the world like a school from which you have escaped?"

"Well, but you know, Mrs Stern, the odd thing is that I like people. Theoretically I despise them, but actually I like them. I'm just the opposite of Emil. He loves them in the mass theoretically, but he really hates them individually."

"Poor Emil! He's a born humanitarian, I fear. But so many of us Jews are like that. You must allow for the effect of two thousand years of prejudice, hostility, and persecution. Even with you I notice he is often difficult, and his devotion is limitless. It really is, John."

"Mrs Stern, I want to tell you something about myself."

Miriam's heart leapt. What should she reply in this darkness and solitude if . . .

"It was about something that happened at Geneva, Mrs Stern. I met a French girl there who asked me to go home with her."

"And you went," Miriam murmured.

John supposed that the deadness of her voice implied disgust at such a piece of casual libertinage.

"Yes. But it wasn't . . . of course, I can't very well explain what it was," said John lamely, for he was kicking himself by now for ever having made such a confession.

"It was just an adventure, eh?" said Miriam, hoping that her voice did not sound discouraging.

"Yes, I suppose you could call it that. I know you're shocked, but I'm not shocked by it. I wouldn't have told you if I had been. It was rather beautiful really. At least it was beautiful until I wanted her to be sentimental, and then she made me feel rather a fool."

"At least this French girl seems to have been honest," commented Miriam, half to herself.

"And she was awfully decent to me," he added.

"I think I should call her a fortunate young woman. Thank you for telling me, John."

"Fortunate?" he repeated in perplexity.

"Put it that you were both fortunate—you to escape the harpy you might have chosen, she for having escaped if only for a few hours the cynicism of her profession."

"Well, in a way she was cynical."

"Did she take money from you?"

"No, no. But I don't think she thought I was anything but a joke."

"Ah? Emotionally cynical."

"Yes, you could call it that. She was quite right of course. I see that already. At the time I wanted to mean something to her."

"And she wouldn't flatter you."

But I should have flattered him. And in a short while he

would have been bored by it. And I should have tried to keep him mine. And perhaps one day he would have written another 'Adolphe'.

"How well you understand everything, Mrs Stern. I wonder if I should have been able to tell my mother what I have told you. I suppose not."

"Come back to the house now, and I will play you some Schumann."

After Miriam had played right through the *Kinder-scenen* on the Erard in the studio, she played *Warum?*

"Why indeed?" she murmured to herself when the little piece was finished.

"Why what?"

"Just a question I was asking myself, and I do not know the answer any more than I imagine poor Schumann knew the answer, when he put it at the head of that little piece of music."

Julius came in presently. The crimson-underwings had been set. He took his violin from the case.

"Bach?" John asked. He was always hoping for some Ariadne of an occasion which would provide him with the freedom of the maze.

Julius shook his head.

"I think I'll play Beethoven's Sonata in F at my first concert," he told his mother. "That, and perhaps the Kreutzer and the Mozart in B flat with a few fireworks at the end. I thought I might give two chamber concerts this autumn at Bechstein Hall. Then by next spring I ought to be able to face a concerto. I thought it would be rather a good idea if we could persuade that girl we heard last week at the Salle Verte to play with me."

"Renée Noirtier?" his mother said a little doubtfully.

She was wondering if Renée, who was the perfect *jeune fille* of the French illustrator, with her two blonde plaits and her big porcelain-blue eyes, was the right pianist for Julius. She was wondering too whether he was choosing the right music for his reappearance.

"You think I shall overplay her, *ma mère*? Or perhaps you think I shall overplay the music I have chosen?"

"Overplay the Kreutzer?" his mother queried, with a smile.

"Well, of course we should have to see if Renée Noirtier was up to that. Let's try the Beethoven in F now."

"This is usually called the Spring Sonata, John," Miriam Stern looked back over her shoulder to tell him.

John was grateful to find that the music of this sonata sounded as simple as the music of nursery rhymes.

"Julius!" his mother exclaimed. "You played that quite exquisitely."

"The result of chasing butterflies with John," he proclaimed.

"What's the result of chasing butterflies with John?" demanded Emil, who came into the studio at that moment.

"Julius's playing of Beethoven's Sonata in F. I wish you had heard it, Emil," said his mother. "It was indeed a Spring sonata. It sounded as cool as a fountain on this heavy August night."

"Primroses by sheltered rills," John quoted from Keats.

"Now don't all get too pictorial," Emil warned them, with a hint of jealousy in his tone. "Or Julius will never play it again."

The young violinist knitted his heavy eyebrows and looked at his elder brother.

"I'm feeling rather pictorial myself," he announced. "In fact I have been thinking what a sweet platform pair Renée and I shall make. Little Boy Blue and Little Bo Peep."

"Who's Renée?" asked his brother.

"That girl we heard at the Salle Verte last week."

"You're not going to play with her?"

"Why not? I thought she was good within her limitations."

"Pussy-eyed affected little minx," Emil scoffed.

"She doesn't play with her eyes, you ass."

"I thought she looked rather attractive," John put in.

"I thought she looked frightful," said Emil.

"And who's being pictorial now?" Julius demanded.

"Enough! Enough!" Miriam Stern besought. "Now you're like quarrelsome sparrows in spring. Let's play our Ludo and put music on one side to-night."

Ludo was John's introduction. Miriam, in thinking that he was the first person who had known how to make her children childish, thought of that woman sitting by the white petunias under the candent stars, and dropped her like an old shawl.

In mid-September a letter came for John from his father in the Tyrol:

Dear John,

*I am glad to say that Elise is now herself again.
We are staying here until the end of the month, and shall*

then snatch a few days at Como before we return to London.

I have arranged with the Reverend George Damson of Milbourne Vicarage in Loamshire that you will spend at any rate this autumn with him. He is an extremely pleasant fellow and will have two or three other pupils. Then if you are anxious to go abroad next year we may be able to arrange something. You had better leave Fontainebleau as soon as you get this and let Mr Damson know the date of your arrival. You'll find it pleasant country and you'll be near enough to London to come up for an occasional week-end.

Elise sends you her love.

Your affectionate father,

A. O.

"Well, it's better than school anyway," John decided.

He left Fontainebleau on a golden morning that would frame this vivid summer in memory. The garden was full of red-admiral butterflies and dark velvety dahlias. The forest was immotionable. The swallows were hawking high above the tallest trees.

The Sterns came to Paris to see him off for Havre whence he was crossing by the night boat to Southampton. On such a day even Paris was serene, and it was not until the noise of the Gare de St. Lazaire that John realized the summer of 1900 was ended.

"I shall try to get up and hear you play with Renée Noirtier," he told Julius.

The double appearance had been arranged with Renée's fat mother and father, a voluble business.

The Sterns themselves were remaining only for

another week in France, but John had thought it wise to travel at once. He could not bear to argue about this time at Fontainebleau even by letter.

John tried to thank Mrs Stern; but she stopped him.

"It is I who should be thanking you, dear John."

She looked down the platform along which Julius was walking in order to examine with an air of the profoundest interest every compartment of the train in turn.

"You have made him young again," she said.

"Oh no, it's because he's well again," John replied.

A minute later the crowded train moved out of the station. John went immediately to the dining-car, and found himself sitting opposite an impressive old gentleman with a full white beard, a beaky nose, high cheekbones, and a rosy countenance.

"Wise fellow," he observed to John. "There won't be a seat in the car presently. Never known the Havre train so full."

They talked the commonplaces of travellers for a while until presently the old gentleman asked John's name.

"Ogilvie, eh? Well, I had an Ogilvy for a grandmother. She was from the Ogilvys of Dunlagas. Which Ogilvys are you?"

"We are from the Ogilvies of Drumbeg."

"Ah, I'm not so well up in the Ogilvy lines. Do you spell yourself with an 'ie' or a 'y'?"

"With an 'ie'. My grandfather left Scotland as a boy, and either his father or his grandfather was a younger son of John Ogilvie of Drumbeg. I know my great-grandfather married a Macleod."

The old gentleman crimsoned with excitement.

"A Macleod? A Macleod, do you say? Which Macleods?" he asked urgently.

"I'm not quite sure; but she came from Sutherland."

"Assynt?"

John looked apologetic.

"Yes, it was Assynt as a matter of fact."

*I charge thee, boy, if e'er thou meet
With one of Assynt's name—
Be it upon the mountain side,
Or yet within the glen.
Face him, as thou would'st face the man
Who wronged thy sire's renown.
Remember of what blood thou art,
And strike the caitiff down!*

The damning lines in Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* had made John disinclined to pursue the history of his great-grandmother in case he should find himself under the stigma of descent from the Macleod who sold Montrose to the Covenanters for four hundred bolls of meal.

"We're probably cousins," declared the old gentleman. "I'm a Macleod . . . Torquil Macleod, the tenth of Ardvore in Assynt. And the last," he added. "Married three times. One daughter by every wife. Wives all dead. Three daughters unmarried. What was your great-grandmother's first name?"

"I don't remember. But I expect I could find out from one of my uncles. My father doesn't take much interest in family history."

"You find out the name of your great-grandmother, and as soon as I get back to Ardvore I'll dig her out. Whom did she marry?"

"Patrick Ogilvie. He was a lawyer in Edinburgh at the beginning of this century."

"Oh, we'll dig her out without a doubt," exclaimed the Laird of Ardvore enthusiastically. "And I'll be surprised if we're not cousins."

When John and his new friend reached the steamer they found that every berth was taken.

"Never mind. We'll have to rig up a corner in the smoking-saloon," said Ardvore.

But the smoking-saloon proved smelly and crowded.

"Come on. It's a fine night. We'll sit out on deck under my plaid."

Ardvore covered his white locks with a deerstalker, and led the way on deck. John put him at four inches taller than himself, which would have made him six foot three. Presently they were ensconced on two deck-chairs in a snug corner aft, with Ardvore's heavy plaid over their knees, and a couple of pillows. The night was calm; but out in the Channel there was an autumnal chill in the air, and a light fog blurred the moon.

Soon after they were settled John happened to address his new friend as Mr Macleod.

"Don't call me Mr Macleod, young man. I'm not my own factor."

John could not believe that he was meant to address this genially fierce old gentleman as 'Macleod' and went back to the 'sir' he had been using.

"I didn't mean that," he was told. "You should call me Ardvore."

This gave John a romantic thrill. Clanranald . . . Appin . . . Seaforth . . . Keppoch . . . Lochiel . . .

"I've never been in the Highlands," he sighed. "In fact I've never been in Scotland."

"You're coming to stay with me," Ardvore announced. "But don't forget about that great-grandmother. Don't you dare arrive at Ardvore without the details, or I'll shut the door in your face, and if a Highlandman shuts the door in your face it means you must have committed an unforgivable crime against man and an inexpressible sin against God. Yes, you're coming to stay with me at Ardvore. And I'll show you the claymore with which my great-grandfather cut down three dragoons at Falkirk on January 17th, 1746. Not many Macleod lairds were out. Of Siol Thorcuil, that is Macleods of Lewis, Mac Ghille Chaluim and my great-grandfather; of Siol Thormaid, that is Macleods of Harris and Dunvegan, Bernera and young Muiravonside. Five Macleods went from Assynt with my great-grandfather to join the Earl of Cromartie, and what I'm hoping is that one of them was your great-grandmother's grandfather."

John glowed. That would obliterate the stigma, if such a stigma was attached to his ancestry, of Macleod of Assynt.

"I'll write to my uncle as soon as I get down to this parson's place in Loamshire where I'm going."

"We can't put off this visit too long, Ogilvie. Hang it, I'd like you to come up this winter. When you get to my age . . . what age do you think I am?"

John hesitated.

"Sixty-five?"

Ardvore smacked his knees with delight and laughed with a roar that might have come from a man of forty.

"Seventy-eight, a'bhalach," he shouted.

John was under the impression that the old man had called him 'varlet'. It was the first Gaelic word he had heard.

"You don't believe me, eh?" Ardvore demanded, turning round and fixing John with a pair of glacial blue eyes.

"Yes, of course I do," John assured him hastily.

"Ah, it was the Gaelic. A'bhalaich. Boy. Simple, isn't it? But here's something that will make you sit up. Do you know that I've spoken to a man who remembered Culloden? I have. And if you live to my age and tell the story I'm going to tell you now, most people will think you a liar. When I was eight years old, that was in the year 1830, I was staying with some Mackenzies in Wester Ross. In those days there was an inn at Gairloch over the door of which was nailed a sheep's skull. I was standing outside in the road and looking up at it and wondering why it was there when an old man came along and asked me, in Gaelic of course, what I was looking at. I told him, and he asked me how old I was. Pity you can't understand Gaelic. These tales sound better in their own tongue. 'Eight years old, a'bhalaich?' he exclaimed. 'When I was eight years old I saw that sheep's skull nailed up on that door. That was nailed up there ann am bliadhna a 'Phrionnsa, that is to say in the Prince's Year. You know what that was?'"

"Not 1745?" John asked in awe.

"From the summer of '45 to the summer of '46 is still called the Prince's Year. In 1746 that old bodach was a boy of eight standing outside the inn and watching boats coming over from Lewis—Seaforth's men in them. It was a calm cold grey morning in April, the kind of morn-

ing we often get in the west when it's blowing like a Cossack on the east coast. While he was standing there a fellow rode up to the inn-door on a shaggy pony. His head was bound up in a bloody bandage, and he knocked on the inn-door. 'Cabarfèidh! Cabarfèidh!' he cried. Out came a man in a fine laced coat with the sheep's head he had been eating in his hand. It was Seaforth himself. The messenger had brought the news of Cullo-den. Seaforth ran down to the side of the loch and with the sheep's head waved back the boats. Then he flung it in the road, called for his horse and servants, and rode back east to congratulate Cumberland. It might have changed history if he had called out his clan a month earlier. The boy he left staring after him picked up the sheep's head and was beginning to gnaw what remained of the flesh when the innkeeper took it from him and nailed it above the door to commemorate the incident. The boy lived to be ninety-two and tell the story to another boy of eight years old. Now I tell it to you, and if you live to my age—how old are you now?—well, if you live to September 1960, you'll be able to boast that you met a man who met a man that remembered a fatal April two hundred and fourteen years ago. Of course nobody will believe you, but that won't matter to you. Nobody minds at seventy-eight whether people believe him or not. He's beginning to think about what he believes himself. It's time. Now then, dean cadal, which means 'go to sleep'."

Torquil Macleod of Ardvore pulled the deerstalker down a little further, tied the flaps a little tighter under the chin, and five minutes later was snoring on a queer reed-like note. John leaned back, gazing at the blurred moon,

and begging fortune not to deny him that visit to Sutherland.

At Southampton John parted from his new friend who having let Ardvore until the end of September was on his way to join his three daughters at Bournemouth.

"Now don't forget, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe, I want the name of your great-grandmother and if possible the name of her father."

Ardvore with a wave of the arm passed on to deal with the problem of transporting himself to Bournemouth, and John took his seat in the train for Waterloo.

After he had finished his packing at Church Row, he decided not to go down to Milbourne until the next day, and he took the opportunity to investigate the claims of various makers of bicycles for the new machine with a free-wheel which his father had agreed to his buying.

"You're going in for a free-wheel, are you, sir?" the man at the bicycle shop in Hampstead High Street asked a little dubiously. "Well, sir, I'm going to be perfectly frank with you and say right away that, though I believe the free-wheel has come to stay, it might be better to wait a little until we're sure they've got it all right."

"I'm going to have a free-wheel," said John firmly. "I tried one in France, and it makes all the difference to bicycling."

"Well, sir, you know what you want. Only I thought I ought to warn you. What about this Beeston Humber? A beauty. Thirty-eight guineas with . . ."

"No, I can't spend as much as that."

"Well, there's this Sunbeam with the oil-bath and celluloid gear-case . . . twenty-five . . ."

"How much is this Rover?"

"Ah, that's a good machine. Sixteen guineas. Two rim brakes. You want to be careful not to jam the back brake too hard when you back-pedal."

"I'll try it if I may."

"Certainly, sir. You'll be very careful, won't you? These free-wheels are a bit tricky at first in traffic."

John was so much delighted by the exquisite sense of leisure conferred by the free-wheel that he felt he must bicycle down to Kensington and call on the Fenwicks and the Fitzgeralds. The foreman at the bicycle shop allowed him three pounds on his old machine and was perfectly willing to send in the bill to Mr Alexander Ogilvie on his return to Church Row.

John was extremely careful how he propped his new bicycle against the portico of the Fenwicks' house in Gladwyn Road, and while he was waiting for the front-door to open he was wrapt in such an affectionate contemplation of it that he did not hear the door open and was quite startled to look round and find the maid standing there. Six months ago his bicycle was always falling over, so eager was he to run up the steps and note through the coloured glass on the panels the dim form of the maid approaching to admit him to Connie's presence.

Mr and Mrs Fenwick and Miss Hetty were away. They had gone down to Southampton where Miss Connie was acting this week. They might be back next week, but they might not.

At Southampton, thought John, as he mounted his bicycle to free-wheel lazily along the roads which were seeming dusted with amber and cornelian in the late afternoon sunlight. He might have waited in Southampton and seen Connie on the professional stage. It was really a

little alarming to reflect that within six months of supposing her to be the central point of the universe he should be feeling not the slightest disappointment at having passed through Southampton without being aware of her presence.

Mrs Fitzgerald only was at home. The doctor and Edward were over in Kerry. Ellen was on tour.

"Edward will be wild at missing you, John," Mrs Fitzgerald told him. "He and his father shall be back next week. Edward is going to St Philip's Hospital. He tried to persuade the Doctor to let him go to Dublin, but I think the Doctor felt he might get too much involved in politics. He's deeper in them than ever nowadays. God save Ireland, John, but there are times when I fear for my boy, and with Ellen Mary doing this play-acting . . . ah, well, but you shan't be wanting to hear my troubles. And so you're after seeing a little of the great world."

John related his experience over *petits chevaux* and his meeting with Cissie Oliver in the church.

"Fancy that now in Geneva. It can't be such a black Protestant hole at all. But isn't it beautiful now to hear of a girl like that holding fast to her faith? I pray my Ellen Mary will not let this stage life make her forget her Catholic duties. I will write and tell her about this girl in Geneva. Indeed she's a lesson to all of us. Glory be to God Who guards His children, and our Blessed Lady will be having a special care for these wanderers. Will you tell me her name again now? Cissie Oliver? Poor child, to be given a name like that!"

"Yes, Cissie is pretty awful," John agreed.

"Oh, Cissie's not too bad at all. It would be for Saint

Cecilia they would have called her. But Oliver! To bear the name of that murdering devil from Hell! No matter, I will ask Father Peters to say a Mass for her intention."

It was a practical religion this Catholicism, John thought as he rode away from Trelawny Road, in the direction which would take him past the playing-fields of St James's. There was Cissie Oliver in Geneva with her St Anthony, and now here was Mrs Fitzgerald able in London to do something for a girl in the middle of Europe. Yes, it was a practical religion, and it seemed to confer on Catholics an assurance and a security which made them curiously independent of this world. But was it anything more than the expression of accumulated human wisdom? Was it true in the way it was true that he was free-wheeling down the slope of this railway bridge to the gates of the school ground? It would be a pretty good shock to die to-night and find that it was true. Oh, but it could not be true. Scientific progress was making it more and more impossible to believe. Yes, but scientific progress at the same time was making the material world detestable for everybody who was not prepared to sacrifice everything to a material advantage. Suppose scientific progress were an illusion? Or suppose the ultimate result of scientific progress must be the destruction of what it had created? It was as likely a result as any other. That would make scientific progress useless, and if it was useless, did not that cast a doubt upon its truth? It would not do to ignore religion in the search for political truth. This autumn he would have an opportunity to do a lot of reading and thinking about religion. Religion might give him a focus. Emil had been right to accuse him of feeling instead of thinking. So far he had been almost

entirely dependent upon his emotions to discover his opinions.

During this meditation John had been leaning over his bicycle and staring at the bland golden face of the school clock, without realizing that he was doing so. Abruptly he perceived it.

At present that damned clock was doing no harm; but on Tuesday morning it would again be marking the hours of wasted time for a herd of slaves. And he might have been one of them if his father had not met Elise and married her. He owed a good deal to Elise. With any luck he and Elise ought to be friends.

John leapt on his bicycle and pedalled furiously away from that great crimson prison-house. Yes, there might be something in religion, since certainly none of it ever penetrated into those dusty shades, and when he remembered how much of what was good and true and beautiful school excluded from a boy's life, that was a weighty testimony to religion.

John decided that tea was a better meal than lunch at which to meet strangers in bulk for the first time. So he took a train from Liverpool Street which brought him to Loam about three o'clock. He piled his luggage on a fly and mounted his bicycle to ride the four miles to Milbourne.

There was a long ascent from the outskirts of the county town to an undulating plateau of large fields varied by occasional parks with glimpses of the chimneys of some large house among the trees. From the further edge of this plateau the road ran down in a steep zigzag to Milbourne, a conventionally picturesque village beside a stream backed by high woods through which the road

ascended to wide rolling pastures beyond. The church lay a quarter of a mile westward to the left of the village, an unimpressive Early English building with a squat tower which had been robbed of any character it had ever possessed by bad restoration in the early 'seventies. Nevertheless, its open situation in vivid green water-meadows gave it a certain charm which even the Vicarage, a square red-brick building designed in mock gothic probably by the same architect who had spoilt the church, could not quite escape, although in the case of the Vicarage an indiscriminate planting of trees and shrubs had spoilt the tranquillity of the situation and given it a fussy suburban look.

As John bicycled round the meaningless curve of the shrub-bound drive and came in view of the gothic porch overhung with purple clematis still in sparse bloom, and the gothic stone window-frames among the reddening Virginia creeper on the red-brick walls, he decided that something would have to be done to force the pace of life in this Vicarage. He had already spent too many years with red-brick gothic.

The Reverend George Damson could have been accepted as a thoroughly representative English clergyman of the period. He had enjoyed the advantage of education at Rugby while the Arnold tradition was still undimmed, and, from the hour when riding back wet through from a meet he had been inspired by the sight of Cambridge in the November dusk to devote his life to the service of Almighty God, he had vowed to make the profession of a clergyman synonymous with the profession of a gentleman. Toleration, coupled with a belief in the moral benefit of clean healthy sport and the mission of

the British Empire spiritually stiffened by the Church of England to make the world a better place, was the outstanding article of the Vicar of Milbourne's creed. He recognized that there was a lot of good in Romanism, but he thought it unEnglish. He admitted, if without enthusiasm, that there was some good in Dissent. Where his toleration occasionally failed him was in his attitude toward the vanguard of the Oxford Movement.

"Let them be honest with themselves and with us," he used to say. "Let them GO OVER. They will be happier, and we shall be happier.

His prejudice against the vanguard was due less to their devotions and ritualistic extravagance than to their habit of making up for it by an extreme parcimony over freedom of thought.

"We must move with the times," he used to say. "If the Church of England is to be a FORCE it must shake off the rusty fetters of mediaevalism."

He greatly deplored the heresy hunts started from time to time by the mediaevalists, when broadminded bishops and deans were chased with a pack of dogmas from one end of the creed to the other. His toleration could not include the intolerant.

It is a delicate matter to enquire too closely into what a man really believes about the things not of this earth, and Mr Damson would have been the first to resent being pressed. It would have seemed to him unEnglish, and if he had ever attempted to define the sin against the Holy Ghost it would undoubtedly have involved conduct that was unEnglish. Probably his imagination (a rigorously limited imagination, for once again exercising the imagination was an unEnglish sport) saw Almighty

God as an immense nebula giving off somewhat in the form of gaseous emanations an influence composed of the qualities *sub specie aeternitatis* of a headmaster, a cricket umpire, an English naval captain, and Santa Claus. Mr Damson never consciously attributed to the Second Person of the Trinity an unEnglish influence. Indeed, he would have considered the slightest suggestion of such an attribution grossly blasphemous. At the same time, he felt more at home with the First Person, and when he knelt beside his bed every night to say his prayers he made a sincere effort to associate the feel of the mattress with the presence of God. On death Mr Damson abstained from meditating, though like most men who have led an existence without physical pain he could not help wondering sometimes if the actual process of dissolution was going to be an agony. However, that faint dread was very far from haunting his fancy.

In spite of the vagueness of his own beliefs the Vicar of Milbourne was sufficiently well equipped professionally to be regarded as a spiritual authority by his parishioners. His sermons were always of the same length. His prayers were always uttered in the same voice. He did not intrude upon their private affairs when he visited them. He was a burly John Bull to look at and, as any of his parishioners would have proclaimed with considerable self-satisfaction, he was a proper gentleman.

"Ah, there you are," the Vicar exclaimed in a roly-poly voice, emerging from the porch as John jumped off his bicycle. "I'd have come to meet you with the trap if you hadn't been so anxious to ride this new bike of yours." The Vicar would use such abbreviations occasionally with his pupils. He felt that they helped to build a bridge

between them and him. "A free-wheel, eh? Well, you'll want to look out on Milbourne Hill. Come along now, and meet my wife and your fellow-sufferers. She's out in the garden, I expect."

Mrs Damson presented the appearance which many thousands of Englishwomen present when gardening, and she did not markedly differ from many thousands of others when not gardening. She was a large faded blonde, her chin covered with a fine golden floss which glinted in the sun when she pushed back a large battered straw hat to welcome John with that air of synthetic maternity often to be observed among the wives of schoolmasters and coaches, and of consuls in small British communities abroad.

"Welcome to Milbourne, Mr Ogilvie. I've just been weeding my glads. Are you a gardener?"

John replied with an apologetic negative.

"It's grubby work, but *so* fascinating. Last Sunday we had our Harvest Festival, and we had quite an influx of visitors from London itself to see our decorations. So the garden is looking a little bare for the moment. And now come along, and I'll show you your room."

"Mr Ogilvie rode on in advance of his luggage, Alice," her husband told her.

"I'm sure he did," she gushed, in a tone which was intended to convey her profound sympathy with such an impulsive action, typical of youth at its best and brightest.

John found that his bedroom looked out on the hinterland of the tennis-lawn, a grassy stretch planted with isolated hawthorns, lilacs, and laburnums, beyond which were the walls of the kitchen-garden and a distant prospect of the pleasant valley of the Liddon.

"You don't mind a tub-bath, I hope?" Mrs Damson enquired. "We're so old-fashioned here that we haven't installed a bathroom. The Vicar always says that he will not put in a bathroom until the Oxford and Cambridge colleges have them."

John felt somewhat depressed by the atmosphere of the Vicarage. His companions proved to be three dull gawky youths sent here, it would seem, by their parents in the despairing hope that they would pass some examination or other, failure to pass which was blocking their worldly progress. He himself with no examination to pass before he went up to Exeter College, Oxford, next year, being exempt from Responsions by holding the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Certificate, was left to study French and German, in neither of which languages did the Vicar claim to be proficient. The other pupils regarded his freedom with an envious resentment and suspected favouritism on the part of the Vicar and Mrs Damson, superiority on the part of John himself.

"It's a pity you don't hunt," said the Vicar. "I hunted regularly once a week until five years ago. By the way, Ogilvie, I noticed you weren't at Matins this morning. Now don't think I'm trying to intrude upon your religious feelings; but it sets a good example, and it GETS ONE UP. That's why I have Matins every morning at eight o'clock. I know you won't mind my saying this. Yes, it sets an example to the servants. I think we're apt to forget the practical value of religion. Now, mind you, don't imagine I'm trying to force you to come to church. I am no bigot. But I dread slackness, and I should blame myself if . . . well, let's put it this way, Ogilvie, you're here in the position of a guest at the Vicarage, because

after all scholastic relations between us do not really exist. So I'm asking you to turn up at Matins in order to avoid stirring up any notions about favouritism among my pupils. With them, for their own good, I have to be more positive."

After this John never missed the Vicar's eight o'clock service, and gradually the voice of that burly man standing up behind the great brazen eagle to boom forth with equal emphasis the taboos of Leviticus and the Gospel narrative became as much a part of the morning as brushing his teeth.

In the middle of October John went up to London for a week-end and had his first meeting with Elise. She was tactfully affectionate in her attitude; but although he felt how unfair it was of him he could not help perceiving in her manner the ingredients from which in time would be evolved a synthetic maternity like Mrs Damson's. While they sat talking in his father's library he even discovered upon her chin that first downiness which with the passage of years would develop into the glinting flossiness of the Vicar's wife, and behind what was now the almost aggressive smartness of Elise he was aware of a battered straw hat, mould-stained gauntlets, a clumsy blue overall with a trowel in the pocket, and a pair of clodhopping boots.

Neither John nor his stepmother approached any nearer that afternoon to the reality of the relationship in which they stood toward each other than Mr Damson himself to

the reality of the Christian faith when he was booming forth the Lesson for the day at the tail of that great brazen eagle.

At the end of the talk, when at any moment the sound of the eminent barrister's key might be heard in the latch, Elise said quickly:

"I think you ought to know, John, that Alec—that your father felt he had been a little unfair to you over the Geneva adventure, but you know how difficult he finds it not to be shy with you. So do tell me if you are hopelessly bored at this place in Loamshire, and I'm sure he'll suggest your going abroad again if you want to."

Whether it was an ungenerous impulse not to be beholden to Elise or whether it was an equally ungenerous impulse to put his father in the wrong or whether it was merely an instinct to protect himself against the slightest opportunity for pitying him John would have found it hard to decide; but he certainly surprised himself by replying:

"Oh, no, thanks, I like it very much at Milbourne. The only thing is that I should like to get a commission in the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment."

A week ago Doctor Meade who was the Captain in command of the Loam company had called in for tea at the Vicarage on his rounds, and the Vicar had suggested that volunteering was the very pastime to suit John's abundant leisure.

"Well, there's a vacancy for another subaltern in my company. Young Pacey-Foote is up at Oxford now, and that leaves me without a subaltern for most of these important winter months."

Doctor Meade was a large flat-faced genial Irishman with the best practice in Loam, one of many thousands of

Irishmen, Scotsmen, and Welshmen who were feeling that the eclipse of their countries by England was more than made up for by the extra light and warmth such an eclipse secured for themselves. If he had been accused of lacking patriotism he would have been indignantly annoyed. There was none of that cynicism in him which could be suspected in Doctor Fitzgerald. He loved the country of his adoption, hated the Nationalist M.P.'s, and gloried in the Imperial Idea. He was in fact what the average Englishman could not understand why every Irishman was not.

"Well, if you think any more of my suggestion," he had said to John last week, "roll into Loam on that dangerous machine of yours and we'll talk it over."

John was under the impression that he had thought no more about it; but presumably he had, and when Elise took the earliest opportunity to put the proposal before her husband pride forbade John to back out.

"The uniform and equipment will cost a good deal," he reminded his father.

"I'm prepared for that," said the barrister; and checked himself from adding that he hoped this commission would help to rouse the owner of it to a serious consideration of his career.

"If the boy should take up soldiering in earnest it would not be a bad thing," he told his wife when John was out of the way. "With his own money he could afford to join one of the Highland regiments, and they are giving commissions in the regular army to a certain number of University candidates now. I'm beginning to get a little anxious about his disinclination to choose a definite profession. I'd already made up my mind at his age that I was going to the Bar."

"But young men seem to have been more precocious in practical matters when you were young, Alec. I think modern education tends to protract adolescence," said Elise.

"I don't know, John's scrape in Geneva was pretty precocious. I never gambled away all I had at the age of seventeen."

Alexander Ogilvie laughed. He was thinking of what the effect of such a letter as he had received from John would have been upon the Minister of St Ninian's, South Kensington.

"I believe my father would have kicked me out of the house," he declared.

"Yes, there's plenty of precocity on the non-practical side," Elise agreed. "But I'm sure modern education tends to keep young men ridiculously dependent in other respects. Would you really like John to be a soldier, Alec? Surely he has too many brains and too much of Jane Austen's sensibility for the army?"

"Well, I think there will be a change in military matters after the disastrous exposure of this war. More university commissions are themselves a sign that the authorities want to encourage others beside the fool of the family to enter the army. Once the convention is broken there should be a career for the professional soldier with brains."

"Still, I wouldn't if I were you put too much hope in John's future as a soldier. I think this experience will be valuable and I'm all in favour of it; but I do not see him as anything except an artist."

"As a what?" Alexander Ogilvie exclaimed. "Why he couldn't enamel a washstand!"

"But I was thinking of him as a writer."

The barrister shook his head.

"Don't put that idea into his head, my dear."

"If he's meant to be a writer he won't require ideas from me, Alec."

When Elise said this, there flashed across Alexander Ogilvie's mind the picture of Athene sitting in that very chair where Elise was sitting now.

"But, Athene, it would really be better for the boy to go to a boarding-school."

"No, no, dearest Alec, I dislike intensely the boarding-school system. If a boy is the sort of boy who takes to the normal life of school he flourishes at the expense of weaklings, and I would not have John do that. On the other hand if a boy has the temperament of an artist the boarding-school is fatal. I detest all schools, to be candid, and I feel I am being weak in compromising by sending him to a day-school; but at least I can watch its daily effect upon him, and you must promise me, Alec, that if I think it is wiser to take him away you will not oppose it for reasons which have been argued over and over again. You have made a success of life, Alec. Therefore you may hold an exaggerated notion of the value of a conventional English education."

"We'll call it British, Athene."

"Alec, Alec, how pathetic you expatriated Scots are with your insistence on that quaint meaningless amalgam of Britain! In Cornwall we are prouder. We still regard England as a foreign country, and we lost our material independence hundreds and hundreds of years before Scotland lost hers."

"This is rather beside the point, Athene."

"The lawyer speaks. I bow to his logic. But, Alec, while John is young I want to be sure he has a chance of considering

some of the illogical ideas that his mother entertains in her crack-brained Celtiberian head. And if she lets him go into a nice gentlemanly little preparatory school situated in a bracing position on a southerly slope of the Sussex downs, he will either come back with his noddle full of silly games or he will come back secretive and shy because his essential self has been violated by the communal self of an English preparatory school situated in that bracing position on the southerly slopes of the Sussex downs."

And a few months after this discussion Athene had died.

"What are you thinking about, Alec?"

"I was thinking about Athene."

"She must have been an exquisite creature," said his second wife, looking across at the portrait of Athene over his mantelpiece, which had been the wedding-present of an unsuccessful suitor, one of the young romantic painters of the early 'eighties, whose work was already discredited. It was the picture of a dark slip of a girl with burning eyes, ivory pale and gowned in a deep violet-crimson velvet, the colour of an almandine. She was standing among the grey trunks of ash-trees, listening.

"It seems absurd to think that when that picture was painted I was only eight years old," Elise sighed.

"She *was* an exquisite creature," Alexander Ogilvie murmured to himself. "But she was always strangely elusive. She was fey even when that picture was painted, and I'm sure she knew she would not live long when we had that talk."

"What talk?"

"Oh, I'd forgotten you had not heard it," said Alexander Ogilvie in some embarrassment. "It was a talk

about John's education. Elise, I'm grateful to you. I shall always take your advice about John. Perhaps I have not fully realized until now what is owing to a beautiful young woman who can love a middle-aged man like myself."

"But, you see, Alec, you're still such a baby really."

"And I might have lost you before we were married!"

He rose impulsively and took her in his arms.

"I wonder why you love me?" he whispered. "And I dare say nobody except myself believes that you do."

"And therefore they all think me a cold-blooded designing hussy?" asked Elise, twinkling.

But to herself she was thinking this was probably the first moment when she could declare sincerely that she loved Alec with the simple passion he had dreaded putting to the proof. There had been affection, admiration, and a touch of ambition in her marriage; but now through the influence of that dead wife and her son there was what could indeed be called love.

John, completely ignorant of the catalysis he had effected in the emotions of other people while remaining unchanged himself, went back to Milbourne with the news of his father's permission to become a second-lieutenant in the First Loamshire Volunteers.

Mr Damson was enchanted. His pupil's resolve seemed to bring the rattle of gun-carriages into the Vicarage drive, the sound of pom-poms into his garden, and the whole South African War into his study. Dr Meade was now never alluded to except as Captain Meade. The advantages of Milbourne for the next sham-fight were elaborately debated. The superiority of the

1st Loamshire Volunteer Battalion clad in scarlet and officered chiefly by country gentlemen over the 2nd Loamshire Volunteer Battalion clad in grey and officered chiefly by local tradesmen was boisterously proclaimed. The First Battalion was more like the Yeomanry or the Militia than the Volunteers.

"The best battalion in the South-east Midland Brigade," declared the Vicar. "I ought to have been a soldier, you know, Ogilvie."

"But the Church would have lost by that, dear," Mrs Damson protested mildly.

"I don't know," said the Vicar. "I might have commanded a battalion now. Why, I might have been a Brigadier. South Africa has given wonderful opportunities to the man who could accept RESPONSIBILITY. And without flattering myself I think I can assert that I should not have flinched from THAT."

"No, indeed, dear," Mrs Damson agreed. "But you would have been a very great loss to Milbourne. A very great loss indeed. And I'm sure even the Dissenters would not deny that."

When John's uniform arrived from the tailor's, the Vicar's excitement rose to fever heat, and if the only articles of the martial equipment he could himself do with comfort or dignity were the haversack and the water-bottle (though he did try to squeeze himself for a minute into the Sam Browne belt), he derived almost as much satisfaction from seeing John put on first his dark blue serge undress, then his scarlet serge tunic with white facings, and finally his silver-laced scarlet broadcloth tunic of ceremony. He did try the effect of the forage-cap, and in it looked like a burglar doing time; but the helmet

balanced on the top of his big head fell off, and the spike caught him a nasty jab on the instep.

John had three drills a week to attend—two for his instruction in the armoury with other recruits in the mysteries of presenting and porting arms and all the rest of it, and one in the drill-hall when with the help of hoarse *sotto voce* prompting from the colour-sergeant and other non-commissioned officers, he managed to tie up the company into intricate formations and untie it again to the satisfaction of Captain Meade and the chesty sergeant-instructor.

One Saturday afternoon the Loam company had a route march, and just when the men were parading outside the drill-hall an urgent call came for Captain Meade which necessitated his driving off into the country and leaving John in command.

All went well through Loam; but on reaching the neighbouring town of Bigham which was really a commercial extension of Loam itself the members of the Loam company proceeded to show their contempt for Bigham and its inhabitants by greeting the young women with pip-pips and the bearded old with raspberries.

"Less noise in front there, those men," called one of the sergeants, looking round anxiously to see what John was going to do about it.

John did nothing, for he hoped that the objectionable noises would stop.

Presently, however, some of the men started falling out and chucking under the chin the girls of Bigham, whose shrill giggles completely destroyed the martial effect of the A or Loam Company of the First Volunteer Battalion of the Loamshire Regiment.

"You'll have to check 'em, sir," murmured Colour-sergeant Abraham Capstick, his big hooked nose glowing red with indignation. In civilian life the Colour-sergeant was a tailor, and his experience of the Volunteers extended over thirty years.

"They're good lads, but you don't want to let 'em have a game wi' you the first time out, as you might say. You'll never have the whip-hand of 'em again."

"Company!" shouted John. "Halt!"

He was surprised by the strength of his own voice.

"Stand at ease! 'Shun!! Shoulder arrrms!!! Quick march!!!!"

The company set out marching at strict attention. John at the head with his sword vertical.

When Bigham was left behind, the men expected to hear the welcome order to march at ease, but they got no nearer to it than sloping arms, and for five miles John kept them marching at attention.

When they reached the turning-point of the march the men were allowed to fall out for ten minutes. John called up the Colour-sergeant.

"Look here, Colour-sergeant, will you tell the other non-commissioned officers to give a quiet hint to the men that at the first sign of rowdiness from anybody I shall march the company all the way back to Loam at attention."

"Very good, sir," said the Colour-sergeant, saluting. "Might I say something, sir?"

John nodded.

"I think they've had their little lesson, sir. I think you'll find it quite all right to let 'em march easy on the way back. I think if I was you I wouldn't bother to say nothing to the non-commissioned officers."

"All right, Colour-sergeant. Thanks for the tip."

"And if I might make so bold, sir, we shall be passing the Dog and Duck by Liddon Marsh in about a mile from here. I think if you called a halt and ordered them a half-pint all round it would just about what you might call clinch it very pleasantly."

And so it did. The march home to songs like Dolly Grey, Tommy Atkins, and Just a Little Bit Off the Top, with the Woodbines (five a penny in those days) sparking in the dusk and the red November moon floating gradually clear of the river mists, was a different matter from the march out.

John reported the results of the route march to Captain Meade and was invited by the genial Mrs Meade to stay on to supper.

"He did a good afternoon's work, Kathleen. The men were a bit difficult at first, but Capstick told me he handled them just right."

"Well, now, wasn't that grand?" Mrs Meade beamed.

It set in to rain after supper; but John riding back to Milbourne noticed neither that he was wet nor tired. He knew the moral satisfaction of Longfellow's blacksmith.

The week after the route march John went up to London, and heard Julius Stern give his chamber concert with Renée Noirtier. One could not believe it was winter when those two children played Mozart.

After the concert John was invited by Mrs Stern to dine in Hampstead. The Noirtiers, *père, mère, et fille*, had been invited too.

It would not have been difficult for the least imaginative person to apprehend that Julius Stern was a prodigy of music, and for such a one Miriam Stern was obviously

the appropriate mother; but the widest experience of the world of art would have left its possessor puzzled to understand how that china doll of a girl could produce from beneath all that ribbon and lace such music, and still more puzzled to understand how that plump middle-aged Frenchman, with one of those full fluffy virgin beards that only Gaul seems able to grow, could have begotten her upon that sallow porcine wife with a front like a switchback railway.

"You know, Emil, when I hear somebody like that kid playing as she played this afternoon, I get an absolute conviction that there must be something beyond this life," John declared.

"I call that very sentimental reasoning," his friend observed scornfully. "If we paid attention to every vague intimation of the *au delà* we should soon be in a pretty hopeless intellectual fog."

"You don't understand," John persisted. "I'm not discussing that kid's ability to make an emotional appeal. It's the incongruity between cause and effect. Look at her parents, and for that matter look at her, especially when she was wolfing those crystallized fruits at dessert. If an orang-outang suddenly walked up on a platform and started playing Mozart, you'd admit that it implied the existence of God, because you couldn't account for it except by a supernatural power working miraculously. Very well then, to my mind a girl like that produced by a pair of human beings like the Noirtiers is equally evidence of a supernatural power working miraculously."

"You exaggerate the significance of purely interpretative art, and even 'interpretative' is too handsome an epithet. I should prefer to call it 'executive'. And why

make unjustifiable deductions from the incongruity between the executant and his material? You wouldn't call Beethoven's ugly face a proof of God's existence. You're suffering from the Greek superstition about the importance of personal beauty."

"You consider personal beauty important," John pointed out.

"Sensuously, but not morally or intellectually," said Emil.

"Well, I'm inclined to think that external beauty was intended to match internal beauty," John argued. "And that one indication of man's fall is the high proportion of ugliness among intellectual men and women, or perhaps not so much positive ugliness as a kind of decayed look."

"I suppose this is the result of dressing up in a uniform," Emil commented severely. "Humanity is now to be justified by its ability to strut."

"No, but I *am* beginning to discover that form is as important in life as in art. The other day I had to impress on my men . . ."

"Your men!" Emil broke in, scoffing.

"Let me finish. To impress on the men I was commanding that although I might seem to them an absurd kid I was as capable of compelling them to maintain a recognizable form as the Colonel himself. I was in an awful funk that they wouldn't obey me; but they did, and the result is that since then I feel far more confident of my own form. I can see myself now in relation to other people much more clearly, and the result is that I'm beginning to get a kind of dim idea at last of a design in the universe."

"But where does Renée Noirtier come into this?"

"Well, she doesn't very much," John admitted, "except that if I could get her into relation to music I should feel I was nearer to a comprehension of music, and I have an instinct that without some comprehension of music one simply cannot hope to live completely, and if one cannot live completely one cannot hope to reach any idea of . . . well, of God."

"What does 'completely' cover in 'living completely'?" the younger boy asked.

"Accepting experience, or at any rate not running away from it, I suppose. It would be dismal to get old and look back—say when one was fifty—at all the turnings one had passed without exploring them."

"It might be worse to look back from the end of one of the turnings," Emil suggested. "I don't agree with you that all experience is valuable. I think that notion is exploded. We ought to be able to take advantage of the experience of the past by now and acquire it intellectually. Civilized human nature has outgrown the necessity for many kinds of direct experience. Take a crude example like the disappearance of duelling. Surely that is a sign man is beginning to realize that a mental conflict cannot be solved by a corporal encounter?"

"The South African War doesn't support your theory."

"Because human opinion in the mass exhibits man in a more primitive state of development. We can only deal with that by educating everybody up to the level of a progressive thinker of to-day."

"Which of course is going to be quite easy," said John sarcastically.

"It will take time, but it will be achieved ultimately. Our business in this generation is to quicken the pace.

Individualists like you engaged in the self-indulgence of purely personal experiment belong to an earlier stage of civilization. I should call it a kind of arrested development."

"I might call your condition premature senility," John retorted.

"You might, but it would leave me quite unmoved, for I should prefer the tranquillity of that condition to your theory that if you rush about enough and strike matches in all the dark corners you'll find God in one of them. Besides, you talk about God, but what do you mean by God, John? You must have some clear notion of what you are going to look for."

"I haven't yet," John admitted. "But I don't see that that puts me in such a much worse position than you who have made up your mind that there is nothing to look for."

"Except that I've avoided a good deal of wasted time," Emil pointed out. "You have no profound belief, and are looking for something in which to believe. I believe in man, and the future of man."

"Then I think you're a good deal more credulous than I am. Anyway, I hope you and I will go on being friends, because I shall look forward to continuing this argument at intervals through our lives."

The day after this talk John went to see Edward Fitzgerald.

"Ah-hah! The Yeoman captain with fiery glare, so a tear and a prayer for the croppy-boy," jeered the Irishman. "Begod, Judge, if I ever fall into your hands and you have me shot at dawn I'll never speak to you again."

"Well, I wanted something to do."

"So you took Victoria's shilling. Come on then around the corner, and we'll have one to celebrate your arrival at man's estate. The pubs have been open for exactly five minutes, and this wintry Sabbath of England demands a drink to warm it."

In the saloon bar of the Pines Hotel, West Kensington, Fitz continued to gibe at his friend's surrender of principles.

"It's no use, Judge, you're a true Scotchman, always ready to kiss Britannia's — for a pat on the head from the blowsy old hag."

"What rot you talk," said John angrily. "You don't suppose I'm in the Volunteers except to amuse myself, do you? I must do something."

"So he dresses himself up in a red coat and dances about like a monkey on a barrel-organ. You've a damned odd notion of amusement, Judge. And what does the Infant Samuel say about it?"

"Emil Stern? Well, of course he's like you . . ."

"The hell he's like me," broke in Fitzgerald.

"He thinks like you that it's absurd, but for different reasons. Anyway the point is that you both have a definite object in view. Stern believes that the beginning of the new century will lead to tremendous humanitarian progress and he expects to be in the thick of it. You believe that your country can be cut free from England at whose tail she is being dragged unwillingly along in the wrong direction. If there was a feeling in Scotland like there is in Ireland I wouldn't be worrying. I would be in the thick of it. I see no sign of it. So meanwhile I intend to get all the experience I can."

A London Road Car omnibus, dark blue and choco-

late, lumbered out from the stable archway to await by the edge of the pavement below the window of the saloon bar the moment to start upon its journey.

"You wouldn't refuse to drive in that bus," John pointed out, "because it's carrying a little Union Jack in front as a trademark. Well, joining the Volunteers is like driving somewhere in a Road Car bus."

John debated with himself paying a call on the Fenwicks that evening; but he did not go, because he had just heard from Hetty that Connie's engagement with Arthur Dancaaster was quite definitely broken off, and he dreaded the slightest suggestion on her part that his own chance was now good again. It was not that Hetty really thought so, but his obvious lack of interest would give her an excuse to point out how right she had been in foreseeing that his life would drift apart from the lives of the household in Gladwyn Road. Moreover, he did not want to feel apologetic with Mr Fenwick about joining the Volunteers. He could not seriously discuss what was beginning to seem more than ever the fatuous sentimentalism of Mr Fenwick's political attitude.

When John returned to Milbourne on Sunday night he found a letter waiting for him from the Laird of Ardvore:

ARDVORE HOUSE,
SUTHERLAND

Thursday Dec. 16th 1900.

*Dear Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe,
I have established that your great-grandmother*

The Four Winds of Love

Iseabàl NicLeòid or in the barbaric tongue of the Sasunnach Isabel Macleod, who married Padruig Mac Ghille bhuidhe (Patrick Ogilvie, W.S.) in 1810, was the third daughter of the Reverend Alexander Macleod, by his wife Janet MacIver, who was the grandson of Roderick Macleod, tacksman of Sandwater. Now, Roderick Macleod of Sandwater was one of the five Macleods who accompanied my great-grandfather in the Prince's year, and his mother was a daughter of Torquil Macleod, fifth of Ardvore. That makes us cousins, and not such distant cousins either by our Highland notions. So that renders it more than ever imperative you should come up and visit the land of your forefathers. I am an old man and have begun to dislike postponement. So come, if you can and will, in time to join us in the last week of this year and bring in the new century with us. It's a long journey. Lairg is the nearest station, and then there's another forty miles by coach. If you left Euston on the evening of Thursday, December 27, you would be with us by Saturday for certain. It won't do to get stuck midway on the Sabbath, and New Year's Day is on a Tuesday. Wrap yourself up well, for the drive across Sutherland can be perishing, but you'll be agreeably surprised by the mildness of the weather on the west coast, with any ordinary luck that is.

I shall look forward to hearing you are coming, my dear cousin, and look forward also to cementing with friendship the agreeable acquaintanceship we struck up in the Havre packet.

Yours most truly,-

Torquil Macleod of Ardvore

John's father made no difficulty about his accepting this invitation, although he was inclined to be a little scornful of Ardvore's relationship.

"I can't work it out, and God forbid that I should try; but it would astonish me to find that we are as near as fortieth cousins, which is as good as to say that we are no relations at all."

"Don't be so discouraging, Alec," said his wife. "I applaud this pilgrimage to the North."

"I've always left that kind of thing to my brother Duncan, but I've noticed that in spite of his interest in our origins he takes good care to spend all his own holidays in the fattest part of Hampshire. He actually took up my mother's family tree once, but soon lost it in an impenetrable forest of the Vosges."

"Never mind. The effort was praiseworthy," Elise decided.

"Perhaps, perhaps. But I spend so much of my time with documents of one kind and another that I am impatient of anything which even faintly suggests the law."

It was in the small hours of a raw and misty December night that John crossed the border for the first time. He would not have been aware of the very moment if it had not been the preoccupation of a fellow-traveller in a condition of maudlin patriotism from the time the train left Euston.

"I like fine working down in London," this individual had proclaimed as he took a swig at the bottle of whisky with which he had fortified himself for the journey. "Och aye, I like it fine. Well, I'm a Campbell myself. Now you'll hear them miscalling the Campbells. . . . Yes, I'm a Campbell myself. George Campbell, aye, that's me."

John looked politely at this representative of the great clan which in his belief had wrought more spiritual damage on Scotland than any other. He saw a sandy-haired raw-boned man of about thirty with small light-blue pig's-eyes, a loose greedy mouth, and snoutish nose.

"George Campbell," his companion repeated. "George Campbell of Ashford and Jones. You'll have heard of Ashford and Jones?"

John had to admit ignorance.

"You've no' heard of Ashford and Jones? Gosh, but it's remarkable the ignorance anybody meets with in a railway-carriage. Now, you can take it from me, Mr. . . ." the proud member of the firm of Ashford and Jones paused for enlightenment.

"Ogilvie."

"And you a Scot yourself! Man, it's fearful. Well, I'm telling you. Ashford and Jones make twenty-five per cent, och, I'll go further, I'll say that Ashford and Jones make twenty-seven or even twenty-eight per cent of all the lavatory basins and lavatory pans and up-to-date sanitary fittings used in Great Britain. And I'm telling you this. They're out to capture the biggest part of the foreign markets. And they'll do it. And do you know for why they'll do it? Because the whole of the staff is Scottish. That's the secret of success. Aye, I like fine working down in London, but the English are awfu' stupid. And they're awfu' lazy too. Aye, you'll hear folks miscalling the Campbells, but I'm proud to be a Scot and I'm proud to be a Campbell. And it's just jealousy. I'm telling you. Every Englishman knows that a Scotsman is a better man than he is—och, he won't admit it, but he knows it all the same. And every Scotsman knows that the best Scot of

them all is a Campbell. Well, well," he maundered, raising the bottle to his lips. "Here's tae us, wha's like us? I'm sorry you'll not take another dram with me. Aye, it's disheartening to travel home with a brother Scot and find he'll no' drink a wee dram with you. But I'm not going to make it a personal matter. I'm a Highlandman. My grandfather lived in Inveraray. Aye, he did that, and then he came down to Glasgow. But still the heart is Highland. That's right, isn't it? And do you think because I've been working for twelve years on the clerical side of Ashford and Jones I've forgotten I'm a Scot? I have not. I'll tell you a wee bit of a business secret, Mr Ogilvie. I wouldna be surprised to be offered the post of assistant-manager to the new branch of the firm Ashford and Jones are opening in Cape Town. I'm a Liberal myself; but that disna say I'm to refuse to take the chance of business expansion in South Africa when this unjust war is over. If Joe Chamberlain stood for a Scottish constituency I'd vote against him. I'd vote against him wherever he stood. But I'm no' such a fool as to sacrifice my career because I dinna believe this war is a just war. Not at all. I take a more long-sighted view than that. We're no' like the English. We Scots have a grand sense of responsibility. We don't believe in throwing away everything for just an idea."

"I haven't noticed that the English will fling away much for an idea," said John.

"What? Have you no' seen the way an Englishman will tog himself out with new clothes? Man, they'll throw away all they've got for the idea of being dressed better than other people. And if I was to throw away my career because I thought we had no right to fight against

a couple of wee God-fearing countries like the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, 'it would be just self-indulgence. No man can throw away his career.'

"Wallace threw away a good deal for an idea," John pointed out.

"Wallace? Wallace? Och, you mean William Wallace. Aye, he was a great patriot. But there's a lot of water flowed along Clydeside since Wallace. Here, but you're no' suggesting that I'm no' a guid Scot? For why would I be spending my money to travel home for Hogmanay if I were no' a guid Scot? Aye, I know they give cheap return tickets for a week, but mighty me, they're no' so cheap as all that. And I'm telling you. When we cross the border to-night I'm counting to put my head out of the carriage window and give a cheer. And there'll be others doing the same right along the train. And I'll tell you this. If you're asleep I'll wake you up, because the Scot who sleeps when he's crossing the border to home is no' a true Scotsman at a'. See here, you were talking to me aboot Wallace, were you not so? Aye, weel, I'm telling you that the chap who disna put his head oot o' the carriage window and give a cheer for bonny Scotland and hame has no right to blether about Wallace. Whaur would we be to-day without Wallace? I'm telling you. We wouldna be ruling the British Empire."

"Are we ruling the British Empire?"

"Are we ruling the British Empire? Gladstone! Was he no' a Scot? Rosebery! Is he no' a Scot? Balfour! Is he no' a Scot? Man, you're fair daft to be blethering the way you're blethering the noo."

"So I suppose you wouldn't be in favour of Home Rule?"

"I'm a Liberal," Mr Campbell admitted a little doubtfully. "And I suppose as a Liberal I'm compelled by my principles to recognize the right of a people even like the Irish to look after their own affairs, but the Bill will have to be cannily drafted, for there's many of us are thinking that Home Rule means Rome Rule."

"I wasn't meaning Home Rule for Ireland," said John somewhat despondently. "I was meaning Home Rule for Scotland."

"Home Rule for Scotland?" Mr. Campbell gasped. "Home Rule for Scotland, when it's the Scots who rule the British Empire? Man, you're crazy! Why, I might have said I was fou', to hear you blethering about Home Rule for Scotland, for I've taken a few drams the night what with thinking of going home and seeing my old father and my old mother. Home Rule for Scotland? Losh, if that's not the best thing I've heard in months. And where would Ashford and Jones be if there were Home Rule in Scotland? And where would the Scottish employees of Ashford and Jones be?"

"Oh well, it's not worth arguing about," said John. "You've already made it plain you don't believe in ideas."

"Not in ideas like that," Mr Campbell agreed. "Not even for the sake of argument, though I like fine a good argument."

John buried himself in a book. Mr Campbell took another pensive swig at the bottle and then produced from the pocket of his overcoat the current issue of the *Glasgow Herald*.

"The best newspaper in the world," he proclaimed defiantly, tapping the unfolded sheets. "And you won't find

much about Home Rule for Scotland here. The best newspaper in the world, and coming from a Liberal like myself, that's what I call a compliment."

John nodded agreement with a yawn.

"If you'll take my advice, and, I'm telling you, no man gives better advice than what I give, you'll put your feet up and get a bit of a snooze. I'll wake you when we cross the border. I'm no' going to sleep myself. I'm just going to lie here and think about bonny Scotland."

Thus it was that in the small hours of a raw and misty December night John was roused from sleep to put his head out of the window, and that as the train rushed through the murk he was urged to wave his cap and give a cheer. All he succeeded in doing was to get a bit of coal grit lodged in his eye, which gave him an excuse for not having obeyed Mr Campbell's patriotic exhortations.

John's companion left the train at Larbert. The figure in the blurred illumination of a gas-lamp waiting for the train which would take him home did not look like a ruler of the Empire. Yet with or without whisky he believed that he was equivalently a proconsul.

It was not until the train reached Killiecrankie in the lagging greyness of the winter dawn that John began to recover from the dispiriting effect of Mr George Campbell upon his dream of national aspirations, for under the stimulus of this visit that dream had recurred. Thence onward to Inverness the journey became a somnambulist's progress through the past, when the very figures upon the platforms of stations were ghosts in that snow-threatened northern air. Shepherds, porters, women, rosy-cheeked children were no more substantial than their own frosted breath. Everything had the strangeness of a dream-world,

and at the same time a dream-world's impotency to surprise. Even to-day, except perhaps in the month of August, the station of Inverness seems alive only to the traveller's departure, symbolic of the disembowelled country of which it is reputed to be the capital. John arriving there at the shutting in of the last December of that ruinous nineteenth century felt the loneliness not of the stranger but of the invisible returning dead.

"Yes, I know just what you mean," his host agreed when after many hours of travel by train and coach John was sitting with the Laird of Ardvore in the parlour of the inn at Lochinver. "I think it's probably an assumption on the part of the porters that anybody arriving at Inverness in mid-winter must belong to the place and is therefore in no need of help or information. But here you are, and the blood of Iseabal Nic Leòid should be coursing at fever heat through your veins."

"I think it is," John admitted, remembering the first sight of Suilven standing up in the west like a huge grape-dark hand, miles away above the desolate moorland. What were the mountains of Switzerland compared with that shape of stone solitary as a mammoth upon the edge of the landscape? Huddled parvenus. His first sight of the Laird of Ardvore standing by the inn-door when the coach pulled up was not less memorable. That beakynosed bearded old man in faded kilt was autochthonous like Ben More Assynt itself.

"Well now, if you've had all the tea you want, we'll ring for the trap to be brought round. Another ten miles still to go, and dinner is at seven. A pity it's dark. The road we shall take gives you a grand view of some of our Sutherland bens. Still, all in all, I'm glad you are seeing

the land of your forefathers first in mid-winter. You'll come nearer to the heart of it so."

The way was narrow, and by the yellow light of the candles in the carriage-lamps the crags on either side loomed and beetled fantastically. From time to time the noise of running water drowned the crackle of the wheels on the rough road; but when the trap had passed beyond it, the silence of the evening had the power and profundity of midnight.

After about five miles of driving John heard a pervading murmur ahead.

"Is that the sea?"

"That's the sea. We shall be crossing the tràigh presently. Steady, lass!"

The mare had slipped for a moment on the steep zig-zag of the descent. A few minutes later the trap was running level. The air was salt, and round the next corner the mare's hooves and the wheels of the trap were suddenly deadened by sand which had drifted across the road. In the darkness seaward a long line of breakers glimmered. The pervading murmur was now a roar.

"Nasty place on a stormy night," the laird remarked. "But the weather smells sweet enough at present. Only another five miles to go. Ardvore begins with that township at the bottom of the brae."

Scattered lights showed ahead, and the smell of the sea was mingled with peat reek.

"But, by Jove, what am I thinking of?" the laird exclaimed. "This is Sandwater, the home of your Macleod forebears."

From the doorway of a minute thatched house by the side of the road where it ran clear of the drifted sand to

Wind up the brae an old woman in a mutch came out to peer at the sound of wheels.

Ardvore cried a good evening to her in Gaelic, which she acknowledged with a bobbing curtsy and some voluble observations on the weather.

"Say 'oidche mhath leibh'," his host prompted him.

John felt as much astonished as he used to feel as a child at a penny's working some complicated drama in an automatic machine when the old lady recognized his salute and returned it with enthusiasm.

"What did I say to her?" he asked, as the trap passed out of earshot.

"You merely said good-night. Poor old soul, she lives all alone in that house. Her husband Roderick Macleod was drowned about fifteen years back, and all her children are in Canada. She won't leave Sandwater to join any of them. She told me only last week that there was too long a journey before her that she *must* take soon, and I sympathize over that prospect."

"I wonder if she's a cousin of mine?" said John.

"Bound to be, I should say," Ardvore replied. "She was a daughter of old Hector Macleod, a grand old Assynt character who died in 1891 at the age of a hundred and two. And yes, I'm nearly sure he was one of Roderick of Sandwater's descendants. We'll walk over and have a talk to the old lady about it one day. Oh, there's no doubt about it, you're among your own people here."

John felt his body glow with a warmth of life beyond anything he had hitherto felt. The very boulders of this land, the most ancient rocks in Europe, seemed to stir beside the road in recognition of him as the trap drove past.

It was about half-past six when they turned aside from the road between two rough pillars of granite and continued along a drive through a wood of hoary and stunted sycamores to Ardvore, a long low stone house with stepped gables at either end and nine dormers in the roof.

The centre of Ardvore House was taken up with a large hall which was lighted from above by dormers on either side. A great fire of peats was burning on the hooded hearth. The walls were hung with Lochaber axes, claymores, old muzzle-loaders and other arms; but there were several large paintings of typical Highland scenes and Highland gentlemen, with the usual heads of stags and here and there a glass case with stuffed specimens of wild cat or pine-marten or white-tailed eagle and the rest of a vanishing fauna. Tartan was everywhere, most of it the black and yellow of the Macleods of Lewis, a nineteenth-century invention.

The three daughters of Ardvore rose from the lamp-light by which they were reading to welcome the guest. Miss Una, the eldest, was a woman of about fifty, Miss Maeve, the second, might have been forty-five, and Miss Bride, the youngest, some ten years younger. Although each was the daughter of a different mother and that mother in every case an Englishwoman, the three Misses Macleod strongly resembled one another thanks to the powerful stamp of the laird's features. All three had prominent beaky noses, and their complexions were all of the same weatherbeaten rose scabbled with little purple veins like a chaffinch's egg. All three had the large teeth which continental caricaturists observe in the Englishwoman and which are supposed to be a Norman heritage. All three had the peculiar dowdiness of well-bred English-

women, and all three had attendant dogs, Miss Una a Skye terrier, Miss Maeve a West Highland, and Miss Bride a Dandie Dinmont. No three women could have more completely belied their Gaelic names. They were proud of being the Misses Macleod of Ardvore, but chiefly because it lent them a kind of mysterious distinction in Southern society, for which they felt they paid a considerable price by their protracted exile in the Northwest with their father, that exile which was faintly lightened in season for Miss Una by catching salmon and sea-trout and shooting grouse, for Miss Maeve by shooting hinds and catching brown trout, and for Miss Bride by the arrival of the latest books from Mudie's library. Miss Una had been engaged to a young Northumberland squire who had died of a fever nearly thirty years before. Miss Maeve had been engaged to an officer in the Gordons who had been killed at Majuba. Miss Bride had reached thirty-five with no more romance than Mudie's could supply for her.

Torquil Macleod, the last of Ardvore, wished now in his seventy-ninth year that instead of bothering to marry a succession of heiresses he had taken to wife a woman of Assynt, one of his own blood if poor and humble. Thus might he like earlier lairds have raised up a family ample enough to ensure a successor for the windswept rocky acres and austere house of Ardvore. Such a family would have had a hard upbringing, but what of that? This wild land of Assynt was never a nursery for softlings. Their characters should be furrowed like the face of the Cuinneag, their bodies hardy as the dark contorted pines on the islets of the loch below. The knowledge that the three daughters who survived him would live out their barren

lives in material comfort with the money he had received from three alien wives was nothing to set against the possession of a son and a grandson, yes, and to them might have been added even a great-grandson who in spite of poverty would cling somehow to this land as the crotail to the rocks. He should have married Mary Nicolson—Maire Nic Neacail, oldest name of them all in Assynt. Where was Mary Nicolson now? She had sailed away to Canada after the potato famine in the hungry 'forties. Not a word of her for more than half a century. Yet he would see her dark eyes glittering when the primroses bloomed among the mossy roots of the alders of the burn beside which he and she had kissed the April days away and watched the yellow evening-star dog the young moon down into the ocean beyond the long dim line of the Lewis coast. And then back at Cambridge again it had seemed absurd to contemplate marriage with a crofter's daughter. Down at Cambridge the world had seemed too large an affair to be kicked away as contemptuously as from the solitude of Assynt it could be kicked like a shinty ball. In that curricule behind a pair of spanking greys on the road to Newmarket it would have been as suitable for Torquil Macleod, younger of Ardvore, to wed one of those cream-and-strawberry maids in bird's-eye sunbonnets who waved from the June meadows to the swiftly moving vehicle as to wed Mary Nicolson. Yes, the world had seemed too large an affair then. It seemed small enough now, on the edge of eternity.

Maire Nic Neacail!

At long intervals through the years which had rolled away since last they met she had visited him in dreams. Brief, brief, those visits. Held in her arms for as long as

it takes a golden leaf to float spinning to the ground from the autumnal birch. Brief as a note of music, but long enough to see again her dark eyes and rowan-red cheeks, long enough to feel again upon his lips those flower-soft lips secure in dreams against time's withering. She had not visited him thus more than once in every decade, and she was always gone before he could beg her to speak, closing his mouth for an instant with her mouth as she faded from his arms. Were such visions no more than a trick of the brain? That question would soon receive its answer, even were it to be oblivion which should make a speechless response.

It was in this mood of unfulfilment that the last laird of Ardvore sat talking with his young guest on the afternoon of the last day of the nineteenth century.

They had been down to Sandwater earlier and had called upon old Mrs Roderick Macleod in her little house on the braeside above the tràigh which on that still grey morning was lapped by a Minch that seemed without motion. On the thatch, which was covered with a net kept in place by stones suspended from it all round the house, a company of shimmering starlings chattered. It was not a black house, for there was a hearth at one end from which a square wooden chimney let out the peat-reek; but that must have been a comparatively recent improvement, to judge by the ebony of the wooden frame on which the thatch rested. The floor was the bare ground sanded over. In one corner of the room was what looked

like a cupboard, but which contained the old lady's box-bed. The sills of the tiny windows set in the massive walls were filled with geraniums which interposed their greenery between the view of the sea and the sand with a kind of assurance of terrestrial security. The feature of Mrs Macleod's single room was the dresser which was crowded with plates and cups and teapots of china and lustre, the gilding and crude colours and neatness of the arrangement giving the little room the gaiety of a fair. For pictures there were old almanacs enhanced above the columns of figures by sentimental Highland scenes in a Trossach landscape, most of which still carried the tattered remnants of the bygone Decembers when their utility was outlived, if not for Mrs Macleod their beauty. On this last day of the last December of a century they were an appropriate reminder of mortality. When the laird and his guest had called, the table in the middle of the room had been occupied with a huge open Bible, the old lady's spectacles beside it. Presumably she had been looking at its damp-spotted steel engravings of palms and flocks and patriarchs, of Jehovah's genial miracles on behalf of His favourites, and of the slaughtered heaps of His pet aversions. She could not read, and if she had been able to read would have been none the wiser, since the Bible was printed in English, of which she had not a word.

Like that of most people who have had the fortune to escape the alphabet Mrs Macleod's memory was prodigious, and from a torrent of Ruairidhs and Aileans and Eachanns and Alasdairs emerged the clear past of John's common ancestry with her own.

"She's telling you how proud she is to be related to a duine uasal like yourself," Ardvore had explained to his

young guest, who was looking a little bewildered by Mrs Macleod's voluble enthusiasm. To himself the laird had thought wistfully how proud he would have been to call John his grandson and how tranquilly he would face that last journey across the moorland upon the shoulders of his people, the pipes lamenting Macleod of Ardvore to the mountains and the sea, if he could leave behind him such another Macleod of Ardvore.

As for John he had been wishing he had the Gaelic to convey to this ancient cousin his delight at her recognition of himself.

"So the land of your forefathers speaks to you," the laird said when he and John were sitting by the window of the library at Ardvore, and watching the crimson of the sunset gash the grey monotone of the wintry sky.

"It always has spoken," John replied.

"Now wouldn't it be fine if when you left the University you came and settled up here? You could soon acquire the Gaelic. I don't know what my daughters will decide to do with Ardvore when I am gone. They might sell it. And you might be able to buy it."

"Yes, it would be fine to settle up here," John agreed. "But I wouldn't want to do that unless there was an object. I haven't made up my mind yet quite what I want to do. I expect it will end in my trying to write. But I wouldn't want to find myself fixed here and then discover I couldn't write well enough to justify what would be a withdrawal unless . . ." he looked quickly at his host who was gazing out over the Minch spread below the blunt headland of brownish tussocky grass on which Ardvore House stood . . . "unless I could justify myself here in other ways."

"You could feel you were helping to maintain a traditional habit of life and way of thought which will not be too easily maintained in the century beginning to-morrow."

"Not in the present status of Scotland," John agreed. "But if the country were independent . . ."

"Independent?" Ardvore interposed. "Independent in what way?"

"Independent of England. Separated from England as completely as Denmark or Holland are separated from Germany."

"What on earth would be the sense of that?"

"To maintain that traditional habit of life and way of thought of which you were speaking."

"You won't do that by dragging politics into it. In any case, it is not England we have to bother about up here. It is the south of Scotland. We're a hundred times better off being ruled by England than we should be if we were ruled by a pack of Edinburgh lawyers. Besides, the country is a mass of radicalism, and any kind of Home Rule would mean we should be at the mercy of radicals. No, no, let well alone. As for complete separation, why, that's a ludicrous notion. We could not exist materially without England."

"That remains to be tried," John argued. "But we could certainly exist spiritually."

"Spiritual existence is not enough for an empty belly. It is the belly which always rules in the long run. Remember Æsop's fable. And then there's the problem of the Crown. The separation would inevitably be incomplete so long as you had the two countries under one Queen. But we don't want it . . . we don't want it. Nothing could be worse for the Highlands than separa-

tion from England. We have much more in common with the English than with the Lowlander. Remember that fellow who travelled up with you the other night. There's the effect of Glasgow on good Highland blood. The only chance for a fellow like that is the chance that England and the Empire offer him. Look at yourself. You've been out of your own country for a couple of generations. You have been educated at an English public school. Has that prevented you from responding to the spirit of your own country? I myself was educated at Harrow and Trinity. It has not made me less of a good Highlander. Not a whit less," Ardvore repeated a little irritably, for he was inclined to recede into the mood of unfulfilment which had been lying so heavily upon him of late.

John wished he had the courage to make the argument vital by asking his host how he could reconcile his northern pride with such obsequiousness toward the land from whom he had chosen his three wives; but such a question would be merely impudent. He tried to ask it another way round.

"But don't you think it's rather humiliating for so many Highland lairds to depend for their existence on letting their land to rich Englishmen as playgrounds?"

"What else would they do with it?" Ardvore rapped out.

"They could go down fighting like old Mrs Roderick Macleod. I could not come up here and watch people meekly taking the line of least resistance without trying to do something."

"It would be doing the wrong thing if you dragged politics into it."

"Then I 'couldn't come here and dream away my life," John declared. "If I am wrong I shall find that out in the world. It's good of you to listen so patiently to my wild ideas, I shall always remember that it was you who first gave me the chance to see how they sounded in Assynt."

"Well, I'd certainly rather hear your ideas than these radical notions that young men seem to affect nowadays. But don't bring politics of any kind up here. What we have to do is to preserve our old Gaelic culture, keep the language alive, the music and everything like that, encourage the homespun . . . but the moment you bring politics into it, this kind of thing is at the mercy of faction. You need look no farther than Ireland for an example. The whole culture is being sacrificed to a set of scoundrelly arrivistes like the Nationalist Members. Whereas look at our Highland Members. They don't fling themselves about in the House like a herd of ill-bred schoolchildren. They know that the secret of getting things done is judicious lobbying."

"By being obsequious to their masters in fact," John suggested.

"By good manners, which is by no means the same thing," said Ardvore sharply.

"I don't want you to think I am arguing with you," John replied, "because I'm not equipped to argue with you. Still, if all that could be done is being done, why are you so pessimistic about the future of the Highlands?"

"I dread the spirit of the age."

"And how will you fight that?"

"It is too late for me to fight anything now, but if you

were my grandson I should beg you to stay here among your own people and by the example of your personal life prove to the younger generation that most of their ideas about progress are an illusion. I'd go farther. I'd urge you to take a wife from your own people, and bring up a large family in the traditions of our race."

"I would only do that," said John, "if I believed that the traditions of our race could be demonstrated to the rest of the world."

"They have been demonstrated in the creation of our Empire."

"I wonder if the Empire means anything now. In fact I wonder if it ever has meant anything more than a romantic disguise for shopkeeping on a large scale."

"I'm afraid you're just as much poisoned by all this radicalism as the rest of the younger generation," said the laird severely.

"Now, I don't think I'm the least bit of a radical. In some ways I wish I were. It's rather unsatisfactory to be a revolutionary whose notion of revolution is putting back the clock. That's what a friend of mine once told me was all there was in me of revolution. I think a lot of people of my age are feeling the reaction of the Transvaal War already. We feel that this patriotic emotion is just as hypocritical as most of the other emotions produced by this rotten century. And there again we're suffering from reaction. We've been offered the fag-end of Victorianism and we think that fag-end ought to have been thrown away long ago. If the Queen's reign had been wound up just after her first Jubilee it might have made a difference. As it is we've been educated in the same way as our fathers and grandfathers to inherit a world out of which

they've sucked all the juice. You talked just now of my marrying a girl up here and settling down with her in Assynt. Can't you see that this silly English public-school education prevents my doing that because it has saturated me with prejudices against which I am powerless?"

"I'll tell you now, Iain, that I would to God I had married a girl out of my own class."

"Yes, but you're sixty years older than I am, and though I'm willing to accept your experience I wasn't given the advantage of that experience when I was being moulded by school, so that I'm pretty well where you yourself were sixty years ago. Would you at that date have married a girl who was not of your own class?"

It was then that the old man told John the tale of Mary Nicolson.

"Well, if I meet a Mary Nicolson," John promised when the laird was finished, "I'll remember what you have told me; but I may never meet her."

The lamps were brought in, and the heavy tartan curtains drawn across the window-panes.

John felt a sudden closing in of convention.

"I'm afraid I've been talking rather too much," he said.

"I encouraged you to talk."

"Yes, but it must be an awful bore for a man of your experience to listen to somebody like me holding forth. I wish you'd told me to shut up."

John felt his ears growing longer and suspected himself of assishness. By lamplight he could not imagine how he had allowed himself to forget his manners.

"My dear Iain, you need not reproach yourself. Should

I have told you that story I told you about myself if I had found your speechifying intolerable?"

"It's good of you to say so," John mumbled. Nevertheless, he still felt he had made an ass of himself. He had in fact reverted to normal youth with the lighting up of the room.

Ardvore had sent out invitations for a ceilidh in order to bring in the new century with more solemnity than usual. There was singing and there was piping, there were reels and schottisches, and a tale or two by the old people. There was also plenty of whisky.

The first-footer was a little dark hunchback called Norman MacIver, who was the tailor of Melvaig, a small crofting township between Ardvore and Sandwater. When he entered with the greetings the laird frowned.

"I don't know that I should have chosen Tormaid Sheumais to first-foot me," he murmured to John. "The biggest radical in Sutherland. However, there it is," and with this he drained the dram of acknowledgment. "I suppose he came for luck, and I should be grateful."

The three Misses Macleod retired soon after midnight, but the ceilidh was prolonged in the rooms downstairs.

"I want to make the most of the twentieth century," the old laird assured everybody.

It was about one o'clock when John after what he felt was a most inadequate performance by himself of *The Flowers of Edinburgh* retreated from the more exacting intricacy of *The Eight Men of Moidart* to one of the rooms where dancing was not going on. Here he sat down in an armchair to gather fresh energy and dancing confidence and listen to the pipes and thudding feet farther along the house. He had not been sitting down for more

than a few minutes when the hunchbacked tailor entered the room.

"Hullo, are you not dancing?" he was asked.

"I was having a rest."

"And are you not drinking? Wait you a moment, and I shall bring you a dram."

John did not really want any whisky, but he did not like to reject Norman MacIver's good offices.

"I say, this is a whacking big dram you've brought me," he protested when the tailor returned with a tumbler half full of whisky.

"Och, no. It's no more than a suspicion," said the tailor. "Drink it down, man. It'll do you no harm at all. I have had a few arguments with Ardvore, but I never had an argument with him about his whisky. Yes, yes, his whisky is very good. It roars as gently as a sucking-dove. Now, don't be looking surprised because I gave you a quotation from Shakespeare. I have had plenty opportunities to educate myself. Och, yes, and no opportunity at all to do anything with my education. Well, and how are you enjoying yourself among us wild savages?"

"Tremendously. My great-grandmother came from Sandwater."

"There you are now! And wasn't she the clever crayture to get away from it? Yes, I was hearing from Mistress Macleod, the wife of Ruairidh Ailein, that she and you were relations. Och, well, I dare say you were a bit taken aback to find you had such savage relations?"

"Not at all taken aback."

"Were you not now? Well, well," the little hunchback gave a quick glance over his shoulder. "I would not say that Ardvore . . ." He stopped. "He's not looking

so young as last year. Ay, and he's the last of them. Ay, ay, the very last of the Macleods of Ardvore. Och, well, he has done what he could by his own lights, but the lights were not too bright. Yes, yes, he's a great patriot. Yes, he persuaded ten young men from the townships of Ardvore to join Lovat's Scouts. He did that. Paid their fares to Inverness himself and made such a speech that they were expecting to see the Boers before they reached Bonar Bridge. Still, that was maintaining the tradition of our grand Highland life. Suas leis a'Ghaidlig! Up with the Gaelic! England has had to rely on our Highlanders before, boys. Yes, by God, she had," the little hunchback spat out bitterly. "In Canada and India and Spain. But not fifteen years ago the Royal Scots were landed at Stornoway to keep the Lewismen from running the deer off the forests, and the Marines were in Skye to keep the bloodthirsty peasants from their own land. We want men for the army. We want men for the navy. We want men to sweat for a bowl of meal a day to drag tons of tangle up the beach and burn it into kelp for the lairds to sell at thirty pounds a ton. Stop the villains from daring to talk about emigration. And a few years later . . . a few years later! We don't want men for the army or the navy. The glorious British Empire is at peace. We don't want any more kelp. The price is down to five pounds a ton, and these lazy West Highlanders and Islanders won't work. Let the —s emigrate. Make the —s emigrate. Sheep are more valuable than such a lot of lazy nuisances. What? Is the price of wool down, and are these impudent colonies having the audacity to spoil the market for our wool? Put off the sheep, the way the cattle and the men went

before them. There's only one way I can send my sons to Oxford and Cambridge and that is by letting my shooting to Lord Tomnoddy, dear. Put off the sheep, and put on the deer. They're making an awfully awful lot of money down in England, dear. And I do think it is so awfully jolly for these rich fellows to come up here to our beautiful Highlands and have a little sport. Of course, dear, they're awfully common. Their grandfathers were shopkeepers when our grandfathers were Highland chieftains, but we must move with the times. Money is king nowadays, and these rich fellows will learn in time how to be chieftains themselves. We will teach them to maintain our grand Highland traditions. And the boys can get jobs as gillies. And there will be plenty money for keepers and water-bailiffs."

"But Ardvore wasn't like that," John interrupted.

"No, Ardvore wasn't like that, because Ardvore's land was not a good sporting property. Och, I'm not saying anything against Ardvore beyond this. He encourages the others. He is sorry things are as they are, but at heart he is a landed proprietor, and nobody yet has discovered how to convince a landed proprietor that his tenants are not his servants. And nobody has discovered how to convince a crofter that he can do anything more for himself than vote for the Liberal candidate at an election."

"What is your remedy for the present state of the Highlands?" John asked.

"My remedy would be to join Ireland."

"To join Ireland?" John gasped.

"Aye. Did you ever hear Michael Davitt?"

"I've heard of him."

"Well, I never heard him myself, but a few years ago there was a young Irish chap round here who had met Davitt, and he told me it was Davitt's idea to stir up the Islands and the West Highlands to throw in with Ireland."

John would have given much for a magic carpet to fly down and fetch Edward Fitzgerald to hear this shining revelation.

"This young Irish chap said that Ireland must be free soon, and that Davitt's dream was to unite Gaeldom. Och, it was a great dream. You see his idea was that Belfast was the natural capital of the Islands, and that Glasgow was a piece of artificiality."

"I should have thought that Belfast was equally artificial. It depends on England in the same way that Glasgow does."

"Yes, but with a free Ireland that link with England would be broken. Yes, yes, man, it's undoubtedly a great dream."

"And you'd break Scotland into two?"

"Why not? Ireland was broken into two by the Ulster plantings. If the Lowlands and the East think their future lies with England, that's not to say the Islands and the West must agree with them. Och, it's time we came down to the fundamentals of the business. What has made the success of Britain? To my thinking it has been the mixture of Celtic imagination with Sasunnach solidity. So far so good. But does the Sasunnach appreciate that? Not at all. He supposes that he is a philanthropist so far as the poor Irish and Gaels and Welsh are concerned. In his heart he would be glad to see the whole of them over the ocean. Well, we have mixed our

blood with his. We have made him something better than a German. But with it all he is still much nearer to the Germans than he is to us and to my way of thinking it is time to cut loose if we are to survive. Otherwise we will be sacrificed entirely to commerce and industry. The time cannot be far away now when the choice shall have to be made, between the people crowding together into cities faster and faster and the people who stay in the country. Which is to be sacrificed to the other? The history of England tells us what the answer will be. The West Highlands and Islands cannot be economically independent. Therefore they must choose whether they shall unite with Ireland or with England or with the rest of Scotland."

"But you talk as if Ireland were an independent nation."

"Ireland shall be independent," said the hunchbacked tailor confidently.

John shook his head. Then remembering his friend Fitzgerald he shook it less positively. If there were enough Fitzgeralds in Ireland, Norman MacIver might be prophesying truly.

"I have a friend in London who believes that, and he's the kind of chap who would die to prove himself right."

"I'd like well to meet him," said the tailor. "I would do the same myself if the chance came. Life must be given for life to be gained." He drained his glass of whisky. "What a century is before us! Yet there is one beautiful piece of consolation. The mess man is making of himself proves that there must be a God. And the biggest mess of all is being made by the ministers with their God just about twenty-thousand times as unreasonable as themselves. Ochone, it was a bad thing for the

•Gael when we took up with the religion of the Sasunnaçh. A woeful, woeful day! Have you ever thought why the ministers dislike whisky? I'll tell you, man. It's because they fear the truth that comes with whisky. What a grand and glorious thing it would be if every Gael could be as drunk as I am at this moment. *Magna est veritas!* If the country could be as drunk as I am . . . gabhaidh sinn an rathad mòr . . . it's we that *would* be taking the great road . . . if all Assynt, and all Coigeach, if Gairloch and Applecross and Kintail, if Knoydart and Moidart, Lochaber and Morvern and Appin and Lorne and the Long Island and the Small Isles and Skye could all be as drunk as I am just now they would all see as clearly as I see just now that this century which is exactly one hour and twenty-five minutes old is going to be the last century of their race . . . unless . . . unless . . ."

The hunchback thrust down into the pocket of his waistcoat the large silver watch he had pulled out, and leaned back in the chair, searching with glazed eyes for the thread of his discourse.

"Unless what?" John asked.

Norman MacIver shook his head hopelessly.

"That's the worst of whisky," he complained in a sad voice, "it shows a man what the truth is, and then just when he is expecting to give other people the benefit of his knowledge it deprives him of his natural eloquence."

John went out of his way to visit the tailor several times in his own house, but without whisky inside him he was positively morose except for an occasional flash of sardonic wit. Sitting cross-legged on a platform that resembled a wooden bedstead and surrounded by odd bits of homespun and half-made garments, he would stitch away in a

discouraging silence whenever John tried to raise the topic on which he had held forth in the first small hours of the new century. On the day before John was to leave Assynt and return south he made a final attempt to revive the conversation of New Year's morning.

"Look here, I want to know if you were serious in what you said about Ireland and the future of this country?"

The hunchback looked up from the pair of trousers he was stitching.

"I'm not tasting just now."

"And unless you're tasting you have no opinions?"

"Only those I keep to myself."

When Macleod replied thus John had a sensation that the very land itself was rejecting him. Yet he could not accept the rebuff without one more effort.

"You don't trust me?"

"Och, Mr Ogilvie, don't be fretting yourself over what a fellow like me thinks. But I'll tell you this. If I had not been just blethering away in a dream and it were all a real prospect I'd be happy to think you and I were on the same side."

"Why I asked you that was because Ardvore suggested I should come and live up here and settle down. But I said I wouldn't do that unless there was a chance of doing something more than sentimentalize about a way of life which has passed or is rapidly passing. I said I'd feel of more use trying to do something in the world."

"And you told him quite right," said the tailor fiercely. "To hell with such fancy work, say I. What should become of you? You should just moulder away like an apple in a drawer. Not that I would mind, mark you,

what happened to you if it could help to give back life to this land; but it's too late, too late perhaps by a hundred years. William Ross understood in 1788 that it was too late when he wrote the only elegy for the death of the Prince, whom the rest of the world had forgotten. Too late . . . too late. So why would we be bothering ourselves about emigration and clearances and rack-renting and famine when we could produce John Brown to look after Queen Victoria? Could the Irish have given the world John Brown? Well, well, beannachd leibh, perhaps we'll be seeing you in the summer."

John looked doubtful.

"You're thinking Ardvore will not be alive by then?" suggested the tailor.

"Why, he's looking in splendid health for a man of his age."

"Think you so? I would not give him very long now."

And when the day after this the old laird stood by the coach in Lochinver, waiting to bid his guest farewell, John perceived behind the vigorous frame and lusty face the threat of mortality. He tried to express his thanks for the visit, but Ardvore cut him short.

"The pleasure has been mine, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe. I wanted to bequeath a dream, and perhaps one day you will find it of value to yourself."

The tall figure of the laird standing at the door of the inn and waving farewell in the thin January sunlight was lost behind a curve of the road, and from the coach a couple of hours later John was watching the isolated blue-grey shape of Suilven, sprinkled now on the summit with snow, recede further and further as the west was left

behind until it sank out of sight below the bleak rolling moorland like a ship below the horizon.

"I wonder when I shall look at Suilven again?" John asked himself.

It was to be long enough.

On the way south John was seized with a desire to see the land of Angus and the house of Airlie. It was a tame experience after Assynt, and in the biting wind of the east the formative emotion from which might have been evolved a vital shape of patriotism withered. Yet when on an iron-grey morning he crossed the border into England there was in the sight of Carlisle a feeling of hostility which was something more than hatred for that bloody grave of a lost cause. He too was surrendering at Carlisle. He was one with the thousands upon thousands of other Scots who had surrendered at Carlisle to the way of the world.

All the other occupants of the third-class carriage from Glasgow except one had alighted by the time the train was reaching the end of Lancashire, and John who had been immersed in his own thoughts while dusk was deepening into night and the train roared on through the furnaces of the Black Country, became aware that his only companion was regarding him with an intent and anxious eye from the far corner of the compartment. The fancy occurred to him that this burly man with the walrus moustache and small bowler hat might be an escaped lunatic. In these days of corridors the fears

which could beset railway travellers who found themselves with suspicious companions on a long run between stations sound remote as a fairy-tale of the Grimms, but they were once upon a time everybody's experience.

Suddenly John was addressed by the stranger who had been staring at him.

"Young man," he said in a strong Lancashire accent, "I've been watching you."

"Have you?" John replied, wondering if the communication-cord was in working order.

"Well, perhaps it might be better to say that I've been watching your soul. It's been fluttering round and round this carriage like a butterfly, and it's just fluttered out of the window to be lost in the night."

"Has it, indeed?"

"Has it indeed? Yes, it has indeed. You may talk very off-handed about it like that. But you're sitting there at the moment without a soul. Nay, it's nought to laugh about, lad. If Last Trump sounded at this moment you wouldn't be laughing! Young man, you're an atheist."

John knew that madmen should be humoured, but he was not prepared to declare himself an atheist even to avoid a maniacal assault. He denied indignantly, with the indignation of offended social rather than religious susceptibilities, that he was an atheist.

"You may not think you're an atheist," his fellow-traveller persisted. "But you are an atheist. I can see it in your eye. I've just come down from hearing Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander, the great American evangelists, and though I found Jesus Christ some years back now—August 20th, 1896, on the beach at Douglas, to

be correct—I feel as if I'd found Him all over again. I want everybody to share in my happiness. Watching an atheist like you wrings my heart. It does indeed. It's frightful."

"But I tell you I'm not an atheist."

"Look here, young man, who knows best whether you're an atheist? You? Or me who've just been drinking deep of the fountain of eternal life with Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander? Besides, I've got a brother who's an atheist, and you look just like him—the same nasty kind of obstinate know-all expression. Eh, and, look here, this brother of mine lives at Wigan. We're just coming into Preston. I'll send a telegram and get him to come down to the station at Wigan and I'll introduce you to him. Of course he's a bit older than you, but the moment you lay eyes on him you'll see why I knew you were an atheist the moment I laid eyes on you."

John felt sorry for the Wigan atheist who was to be dragged up to the railway-station on this raw January evening to serve as a specimen; but there was no stopping the religious enthusiast who when the train drew up at Preston bustled off into the dark smoke-wreathed echoing confusion of the big railway-station to send off his telegram.

"That's right," said the enthusiast, washing his hands with satisfaction when he was back again in the compartment. "I've told my brother Jim to come right down from his place and wait for the train from the north. Well, I am glad I met you, because I'm hoping that when you two atheists see each other you'll both go back to your homes and find Our Loving Saviour waiting for you."

However, the meeting was not to take place. As the

train drew near to Wigan it became apparent that it was not going to stop. The enthusiast rushed to the window.

"Come quick, lad," he cried. "Train's not going to stop, but there's my brother Jim on the platform." He seized John by the arm and dragged him to the window. A solitary figure was standing on the empty platform gazing at the train which was rushing past him.

"There's atheist!" the enthusiast shouted. "Dost thou see him, lad? That's our Jim. And by what I could make out of his face as we dashed through he's just as much of an atheist as he ever was. Well," he went on as he took his seat after pulling up the window, "it was a bit disappointing you didn't get a better view of our Jim, but God's ways aren't our ways, and I wouldn't be surprised to get a letter when I reach home to say our Jim found Jesus Christ on his way back from the railway-station to-night. There's a purpose in everything. Yes, poor Jim, I may have saved his soul with that telegram of mine to-night. Oh, well, it was champion to see the way Dr Torrey and Mr Alexander were bringing them home to the Saviour in Glasgow. There were three women and three men saved within a few feet of where I was sitting in the hall. Left their sins behind them when they went out the same as if they were leaving an old programme. As sure as my name's Herbert Wilbraham I've seen the power and glory of the Lord in Glasgow. Mind you, I'm not a bigoted chap. Well, you can see that for yourself. I'm sorry you haven't found Jesus Christ, but it doesn't make me hate you. Not at all. I'm sorry for you, and when I get home to Cardiff I shan't forget you when I'm praying for all my friends. No, I'm not a bigoted chap, and here's something that will show you how broad-

mind I am. Down in Cardiff Mrs Wilbraham has a girl to help her with the rough work, and this girl is a Roman Catholic. That makes you sit up, eh? Well, I suppose we've got to call Roman Catholics Christians, but they're pretty near to heathens, as everyone knows; and yet whatever I might think of this girl's religious habits I wouldn't interfere with them. When she came to us she told Mrs Wilbraham that by rights she ought to get up of a Sunday morning and go to what she called early mass. 'Right,' I said. And every Sunday morning I go up and rap on her bedroom door and shout 'Come on, get up, lass, and be off to your massing'. Our minister, the Reverend Pocock, was a bit took aback when he heard we had a Romanist maid of all work, and he didn't quite like the idea of me getting up to rout her out to mass on a Sunday morning, me being a prominent communicant at Ebenezer, which is our Baptist chapel. And a nice homely little chapel it is. If you're ever in Cardiff I'd like to take you to one of our P.W.E.'s."

"P.W.E.?"

"Pleasant Wednesday Evening. Well, we're quite a happy family in the Lord at our P.W.E.'s, and that's no exaggeration. But where was I? Oh, yes, the Reverend Pocock. 'Look here, Mr Pocock,' I said to him, 'I grant you,' I said, 'this poor girl's religion isn't much, but it's something, and I reckon it's my duty to see she gets a chance to pick up even a crumb that falls from the Master's table.' I tell you, lad, the Reverend Pocock looked down his nose a bit at that, because I think he thought it was like blasphemy to admit that Romanism was as much as a crumb from the Master's table. Still, if he's a bit narrow, he's a good man, is Mr Pocock, and he's

brought up a family of fourteen to walk in the footsteps of the Lord. So I gave him a substantial subscription to our missions in Brazil, and that was that. Well, I'm sorry I'm not going all the way with you to Euston. As it is I'm getting off at Crewe to do a bit of business in Birmingham and roundabout before I go back to Cardiff at the end of the week. I wish I could have stopped your soul from fluttering about like a butterfly before we parted. I wish I could make you understand that Jesus Christ is travelling in this compartment with us at this very moment and that if you'd only look up with eyes of faith you'd see Him waiting for you with open arms. Think what it means, brother, to find the Saviour. All your sins washed away. Nothing to worry about ever again. Marching forward happily for the rest of your life towards the Throne of God. And He's here, brother. He is, really. He's here in this compartment waiting for you with open arms. He won't reject you. He's only waiting for you to make the first move. And you won't make it. It's the fool who hath said in his heart, there is no God."

"I have never said that."

"Then come and be washed in the blood of the Lamb."

"The nearest I ever felt to God so far," said John stiffly, "was in a Catholic church."

"Isn't that dreadful?" Mr Wilbraham ejaculated. "You might have felt just as near to Him in a theatre."

"Certainly much nearer to Him than I should have felt at your revivalist meeting in Glasgow," said John emphatically. "I distrust that kind of religious emotionalism. It reminds me of dogs barking at the moon. One dog starts off every dog in the neighbourhood."

"I wish I could wrestle with you, brother, all the way

to Euston," said Mr Wilbraham regretfully. "But business is business, and my business is in Birmingham."

The train pulled up at Crewe. The enthusiast took from his pocket-book a card.

"If ever you're in Cardiff, Mrs Wilbraham and me will be glad to give you a cup of tea. Don't forget. And, brother, don't forget either that Our Loving Saviour offers you a better invitation than that."

He extended a beefy hand which John grasped.

"What's the matter here?" asked Mr Wilbraham, looking at the platform along which passengers and porters were gathered in small knots.

He alighted. Presently he came hurrying back to the compartment he had left.

"Eh, do you know what's happened? The Queen's dead after all. She died at half-past six this evening. They had the news about five minutes ago, and it's left them quite staggered. I asked a porter what was the platform for the Birmingham train and he said to me, 'The Queen's dead'. Just like that. And I'm bound to say it gave me a bit of a turn."

John had the compartment to himself for the rest of the journey. In years to come he was to sum up the Victorian era in the picture of Crewe station on that January night, in the black-and-white North-Western trains exhaling their steam on the dank nocturnal air; in the knots of people mostly dressed with the respectable sobriety that was considered befitting for a railway journey unless rank and fortune bestowed the right to wear a check ulster like that individual with mutton-chop whiskers, a heavy moustache, and a case of guns; in the tawny glow of the furnace-lit sky; in the clang of the freshly heated foot-

warmers that were being thrust into the cold frowsty carriages; in the permeating ugliness and utility of it all. But that was to be a retrospective vision. At the moment he was thinking that his father would be Alexander Ogilvie, K.C., instead of Alexander Ogilvie, Q.C., that Her Majesty's Theatre would be His Majesty's Theatre, and that after nearly four hundred years there would be a King Edward.

When John reached home he found a telegram from the eldest Miss Macleod to say that her father had died suddenly that morning. In answer to his letter of sympathy Miss Macleod wrote that she and her sisters were leaving Ardvore in order to live at Bournemouth. That visit to Assynt receded into a far remote past, yet without losing the clarity of its shape and the brightness of its colour, like a dream dreamt in childhood.

A detachment of the First V.B. Loamshire Regiment came to London to share in lining the streets with other soldiers of the Queen; but John was too junior a subaltern to get a chance as one of the officers for this occasion of mournful ceremony. However, upon that still grey Saturday he was in Hyde Park to watch from near the Achilles Statue the procession move along toward the Marble Arch. Poignantly indeed, yet somehow without appropriateness, Chopin's Funeral March came wailing up from Constitution Hill; but as the sombre exequy entered the Park there sounded the muffled drums of the Dead March in Saul, a fit lament for that Imperial mistress. There was little to see through the serried crowds except the dark greatcoats and plumes of mounted kings and princes and the tops of the Guards' bearskins; but beneath the tarnished silver of the February sky the

music mingling with the emotion of the aspectful populace seemed to assume shape and pass not so much audibly as visibly. The quietness of the spectators was marmoreal. The snowdrops in the fallow winter grass were not more quiet. One man had climbed up a plane-tree to get a better view of the procession, but he had misjudged the direction and finding himself with his face to the trunk, his back to Park Lane, he tried to turn round just as the first notes of music were heard beyond St George's Hospital. In the sudden hush the snapping of a few twigs as he tried to turn was loud, and the expression on the faces looking up at the sound so frightened the man that he did not dare to move again until the funereal pomp had passed, but astride a bough had to be gazing at the trunk of the plane-tree not six inches away from his nose.

While John was debating with himself what he should do to avoid an anticlimax after the last notes of the music had died away beyond the Marble Arch and the populace were flowing off in black streams, bearing with them a few moments of authentic history, he heard his name called and turning was surprised by the sight of Edward Fitzgerald.

"I didn't think *you* would be at the funeral."

"It wasn't out of respectful loyalty and certainly not in sorrow that I came," said Fitzgerald. "Victoria gave to Ireland not quite five weeks of the sixty-three years she reigned, and three weeks of them were not given till last April. So I thought I could spare five minutes from my life to watch her pass."

"Five weeks? Was that all?"

"Hardly five weeks, and she was always treated like a perfect lady by the Irish she hated and who hated her."

John made haste to tell Fitz about Michael Davitt's notion for the future of the Islands and West Highlands as related to him by the hunchbacked tailor in Assynt.

The Irishman laughed, so loudly that several passers-by turned round to stare at him in disapproval for thus profaning this solemn day.

"They might join us when the green isle is gold, and that means never. All right, Judge, when I take the hangman's drop for Ireland I'll call on you to do the same for Scotland, for I'm hanged if I'll be hanged for two countries. No, no, Judge boy, leave the land of your fathers to lament Victoria and give up your dreaming. Hell, we're still far enough away from freedom in Ireland, even although the Irish regiments are now allowed to sport the shamrock on St Patrick's day for being brothos of bhoys and killing the wicked savage Boers."

"I suppose you'll allow that Michael Davitt suffered for Ireland?"

"He suffered right enough."

"And don't you think that a man suffering for a long time in penal servitude might see more clearly than others?"

"Almighty God might grant him that consolation," Fitzgerald agreed. "But, och, it's a wild wild dream entirely, and the time for Irish dreaming is past. Anyway, listen. Would you like to believe you're a conspirator, Judge? Some of my bold fellows are making a night of it to-night down at Joe O'Malley's place in Pimlico. Something passed with that gun-carriage now on the way to Paddington, and the passing must be suitably marked. Will you come, Judge?"

John hesitated. A celebration of Queen Victoria's funeral was going a little far.

"Don't look so grave, Judge. It's the period not the person we're considering, and by now Victoria is a monument. You wouldn't mind playing ring a ring o' roses round that?"

He pointed to the Albert Memorial, the barbarous gilded canopy of which was gleaming dully through the leafless trees

"All right. I'll come."

"Good for the yeoman captain with fiery glare! 122 Claverton Street, any time after eight. Guinness and Johnny Jameson the only drinks, but plenty of both."

"Claverton Street?"

"That's the place. The Claverton Street Mystery. Where bloody murder was done about fifteen years ago—at least it wasn't so bloody—because the lady murdered her moth-eaten husband with chloroform, but Sir Edward Clarke pulled Adelaide Bartlett out of it and the verdict was not guilty. And wasn't she the lucky one? Well then, we'll be seeing you? And now I must dash for a bus back to the Hospital. What the hell I'm walking this way for I don't know. What a charmer you are, Judge!"

"Well, I'm walking in the wrong direction too," John pointed out.

